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THE HUNCHBACK;

OR,

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A ROMANCE OF THE EARLY REVOLUTION.

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THE HUNCHBACK.

CHAPTER I.

THE HUNCHBACK.

IT was summer, and such pleasant weather as we have only in a northern climate; not sultry, for a soft breeze was coming over a little lake embosomed among the hills, just stirring the forest leaves. It was a scene of rare beauty. The lake itself was placid, and hemmed in by swaying trees, the birch, the maple, and the oak, in short all the giant growths indigenous to our climate. It was situated in North-western New York. The time was that period in the American Revolution when Johnson, Claus and Brandt, were playing havoc with the frontier towns, and the settlers were fleeing for life from exposed stations. The forest was still, but looking out upon the lake a canoe might have been seen coming swiftly toward the shore. It had a single occupant, an Indian of majestic height, wearing above his left ear the eagle-feathers denoting a chief of the Oneidas. He was dressed in a shirt of tanned leather, soft and pliable, ornamented cunningly with beads, and bound at the waist by a wampum belt. His feet were cased in moccasins. His arms were a long rifle, and a knife and tomahawk at his girdle. As the prow of the canoe grated on the sand he sprung lightly ashore, drew the boat out of harm's way and looked sharply about him. Evidently satisfied with his survey, he sat down on a hummock, drew his pipe from his pouch and filled it with leaf tobacco. Striking fire with a flint and steel he lighted the pipe and began to smoke. Half an hour passed and he still sat there; but at the end of that time he rose, just as the sun was sinking behind the western hills, and looked out across the stream, saying to himself, in the Indian tongue, "It is time." Just as he spoke the bushes cracked and bent behind him, and a man came out into the open place near the shore. A strange man, indeed! Nature

had so bent and warped him, that he hardly seemed a *man*. He was naturally short of stature, and in addition to that he bore upon his shoulders a huge, unsightly lump, which made his figure more ridiculous. His head was disproportionately large, and covered by a thick growth of long black hair, coarse and shaggy. A beard which neither comb nor brush had touched for a long time hung almost to his waist, and his white teeth gleamed fiercely through his parted lips. His eyes, strangely enough, were large and beautiful, and he had a small hand and foot. He was armed, as all men were forced to be in those troublesome times, and well armed, too. Besides the rifle he carried in his hands, he had also a dangerous-looking knife in his belt, and a pair of pistols on either side of it. He came on with long strides, for he had powerful limbs, and quickly made his way to the side of the Indian. It could be seen at once that the latter did not like his companion to approach too near him, for he hastily removed a few feet further away, and laid his hand upon his knife. A contemptuous smile curled the lip of the dwarf.

"Do you fear me?" he said.

"Wando *fears* no man," replied the chief, in broken English; "but he no like to be too near the dark little man of the lake."

"What do you *here*, then?" demanded the dwarf, eagerly. "Has no man told you that this is *my* land, and that I have set up my claim to it in *blood*? Caspar Decker has lived here long enough that men should *know* and *fear* him. Indian, what do you want? Why should you come here?"

"The Oneidas have long arms," said the chief, proudly, "but they are not long enough to reach over *all* their land. They are a great people, and they are not the weakest of those who sit at the great council-fire of the Six Nations. Who dare say to them, 'Come no further than this.' Go! I do *not* fear you, dark little man."

"I asked your business."

"It is my *own*. I did not seek to meet you," replied the Indian, testily.

"I think you lie to me," muttered the dwarf. "Whom do you expect to meet here?"

"Capped Samuel Stanton."

"Now God's curse fall on him and all his race and blight them, blood and marrow!" shrieked the little man, stamping upon the ground in bitter wrath. "Is there no place so remote that one of that detested race will not find it? I sought this place to be free from them, that hateful brood, that *ville* family. And one of them, their pride and hope, comes here to-day. Look you, Oneida! Choose some place further off for your meeting; this is no place for it. I hate this captain, but would not have his *blood* upon my hand. There is too much blood on it already. I pray you, choose some other place; another will do as well."

"No," said the Indian; "mus' stay here. Tole Cappen Stanton to meet me at big rock, when the sun was low in the west. Here comes now. Bes' you go away. If stay here me take your scalp."

"You!"

"Yeh. Me take your scalp, if can. S'pose you stay here den I shoot you. Guess you Englisher. Chief much man at Englisher; kill dem, one of dese days, *sure*; all dem red-coats."

Another person broke through the bushes at this moment. He was a tall young fellow, in the dress of a colonial captain, armed like the dwarf, with the exception of the sword at his thigh. He was active-looking, with dark hair and beard and a laughing eye.

"Why, what the deuce have you here, friend Wando?" he said, startled at the sight of the unsightly figure of the hunchback, "I thought you were coming alone."

"So did," replied Wando. "Him *live* here."

"Ah! Then perhaps he will favor us with his absence for a few moments, as we have much to talk about."

"Samuel Stanton," said the hunchback, raising his cracked voice in a forced, unnatural manner, "do you know that I am your enemy?"

"I don't think I could possibly have seen you before," said Stanton. "Your figure is one that would have impressed itself upon me."

"You are right; you never saw me."

"Then how can you be my enemy?"

"I am the enemy to all your race, and have been so for

years. As man liveth and as my soul liveth, I shall hate you all while I have power to think. If I were lying in my coffin and one of you should lay his accursed hand upon it, I should rise and speak to him. You see the place where I live. It is beautiful, for, branded and deformed as I am, sent into the world before my time, I love to be among beautiful things. Here I have dwelt for more than five years, and dwelt in peace. The Indians respect me, for I give them aid. But they fear the man they called the 'Little Dark Man of the Lake.' This infernal hump they think is given me by the master whom I serve. Others have thought so, too, and men with white skins and black hearts have beaten me out from among them, because I was not like *them*. I ask you once more as I have asked this chief, to choose another place for your conference."

"Is this land yours?"

"By possession only."

"We must have our conference here."

"Be it so, then. I have a prophet's vision, and I see strange things. This place is peaceful now; but, before another snow shall fall, blood shall flow like water along these pleasant places. Blood will flow, and I shall be there. Do you dare to come with me, Samuel Stanton, to visit my dwelling? There I will show you strange things. I have two houses. One I will show to you."

"I do not see any house."

"Will you come? I promise you that you shall be safe. Your friend shall go with you. I wish to tell you my story, for, of all your race, you are the only one who does not know it. Come with me, I say, and you shall say that Caspar Decker has the right to hate you all."

"No go, cappen," whispered the Indian, touching his companion on the arm. "Little dark man is son of the *bad* Manitou. Let him stay alone; you go with Wando."

"Not so," replied Captain Stanton. "He has given his word that he will not harm me, and I believe he will keep it faithfully. Go aside, good Caspar, since you are called so, and wait until I have held some conference with our friend Wando. That done, I will go with you. I confess that I am very curious to hear this tale you speak of."

Caspar went a little further down the beach and flung himself at length upon the white sand, from which position he did not stir until summoned by the Captain. The latter sat down on the hummock which Wando had vacated and lighted a pipe, for the soft twilight seemed to invite them to such solace. The Indian sat down at his feet, and together they watched the fading colors in that summer sky across the silent lake. Wando was the first to speak, and his deep voice sunk into sadness as he said, in broken English,

"Look out on sky, cappen. As colors are going from the sky, so red-man is yielding his place in the land of his fathers. That flush will come again in the morning, but the glory which is passing from the nations will come back to them no more. The heart of Wando is very sad. The Yankees and the English are fighting, and for what do they fight? One says, 'This is my land, you shall pay me so much for its use.' The other says, 'No; we have worked for it and made it fertile, and it is *ours*.' And so they fight. But, neither of them think of the Indian, for whose hunting-grounds they are fighting. I have lived long, and have heard many tales from the fathers. The time was when the Delawares and Mohegans, now so few, were a great people. When there was a great tribe called Pequods. Where have they gone? Fire-water and the sword, these two have joined to destroy them."

"We will do justice to your people," said Stanton.

"I no blame any one," replied the Indian. "It is the work of the great Manitou. There are good and bad white men. I think your people better than the English, and so I help them. There will be fighting soon at Schuyler."

"Ha! Say you so?"

"St. Leger and Brandt have left Burgoyne and commenced their march across country. They are coming to the fort. But if the colonel look out, they no take it."

"Trust Peter Stuyvesant," said Stanton. "He will take care that no time is lost. You are sure they are coming?"

"Ticonderoga is taken and the Hurons lap blood. Woe to the white men who fall into their hands! In the old time, when Hendrick was chief of the Mohawks, they came into our country. But, Sir William sent them home howling like

wolves. But, bid your colonel look to it, for they will surely come."

"And where will you go?"

"I must return to the nation for a little while. I seek Joseph Brandt, whom I hate. When we meet, one or the other must die. He sent the red tomahawk into the castles at Oneida, and called for men. Wando rose and said, 'Who will fight for a dead dog?' And he no got many braves *there*."

He pushed out his canoe from the shore, bid his friend a cordial farewell, and struck the blade into the tranquil water. The sun had quite gone down, and a misty vail had fallen upon the surface, through which the departing canoe left a phosphorescent trail. When he was quite out of sight Stanton thought of Decker and turned to look for him. He was lying where he had fallen, face downward on the sand, with his hands clasped above his head. Stanton called him by name and he started up quickly and came to him. There was a strange look in the swarthy face, and Stanton, looking at him intently, thought that the man was struggling with his better angel.

"You will go with me?" he said, casting down his eyes
"You will trust yourself with the hunchback?"

"I will," said Stanton. "Try me."

They left the shore of the lake and struck across the point of land on which they stood. In a few moments the outline of a rude hut, half hidden by the trees, showed itself in the way. It stood in a little opening, surrounded on every side by large trees. Whoever had built the hut had made it strong. The walls were double, and formed of logs two feet in thickness, making a wall which would have been proof against any thing except artillery; and, as was not often done the roof was also formed of logs, dovetailed into the others in a very strong manner.

"You live here, then?" said Stanton.

"I do," replied the hunchback.

"Did you build this cabin?"

"I did."

"Not alone?"

"No other hand was laid upon a log." Seeing the surprised

look with which the other regarded him: "There is strength in this misshapen trunk of mine, and my limbs are of full size. This is my castle. Let us enter. Here I am safe. The Indians know my dwelling, but they will not harm me, for they think that the finger of the Great Spirit has been laid upon me."

He threw open the door, and they passed in together. The room was dark, but he quickly ignited a fat pine knot and thrust one end into a crevice in the side of the hut. Looking about him, Stanton saw to his surprise many evidences of a cultivated taste. There were books upon a low, rough table, which would have been quite beyond the intelligence of an ordinary man, and one of those clumsy editions of the Bible common in those times was placed carefully on a shelf out of the reach of prying fingers, together with a Book of Common Prayer and a Psalmist. He had several chairs, made by twisting tough branches together in various directions, and one of these he offered his guest, while he sat down and split some fine sticks for making a fire. This done, he placed them in the fireplace, and lighted them with a flint and steel. When they were kindled, he piled on more wood, and soon had a blazing fire. Going to a set of shelves covered by a cloth curtain, he took out some venison steaks, and began to prepare supper. As he bustled about on this cheerful errand, seldom looking at his guest, the latter could not help comparing him with the fabled Genii of Turkish tales. His rough face kindled into a smile, and he worked away zealously. From a deep receptacle under the floor, he took out some potatoes, and put them in the ashes to roast. When his steaks were done, he took them up on a wooden plate, and placed them on the low table, and then raked up the ashes to look at his potatoes. When they were done, he placed other plates for himself and guest, brought water in a carved wooden goblet, and the meal was ready. Since they had entered he had not said a word, and he now signified by a nod that supper waited. He seemed intent upon the comfort of his guest, helped him bountifully, pressed more upon him, until he refused to eat longer. Then he cleared away the dishes, washed them, and was ready to tell his story.

CHAPTER II. ^{CON}

CASPAR DECKER'S STORY.

THE hunchback drew a chair near the dying flame, and sat down. His face was contracted by an expression which had in it something of sorrow and something of pain. Perhaps it pained him to tell his sad history to one of a race who had injured him deeply. But he conquered his repugnance, and began the tale.

" You wonder to see me here," he said, " an outcast, living alone in this wild region, in hourly danger from the knives of the savages. But, I have no fear of what men can do to me. It would be sweet to die. When this unlovely casket which Heaven has given me to keep my soul in, shall be laid to rest, I shall not know sorrow more. I have sometimes wondered whether this misshapen trunk of mine could indeed rest in peace, and I have concluded that it will. The earth, from whose breast I was taken, will be a kind mother to me, and wrap me as softly and keep me as warm as any six-foot handsome youth, who will fall upon gory battle-fields in this war for liberty. Well, I waste time, when I should be telling you my story.

" It does not matter where I was born, or in what state my early years were passed. It is enough that I had a mother, who loved me, unligested lamp of Humanity that I was. But, she died early, and I wandered out into the world, rich, but trod len down. There were men who pretended to love me for myself, who only sought the good which money can give. I did not mind that. I would have given any thing for friendship, even though it were bought with a price.

" Among the hosts who sat at my table, drank my wine, and ate my food, not one loved me for myself. But I was happy enough in the thought that I had wealth enough to purchase friends. Boy, in your after life, trust no man! Old Timon of Athens did well, but of all mankind, he trusted one, I trust none, no, not one.

"I tired of it at last; and then, a man who had called me friend, stabbed me through that friendship—a man highly esteemed among his straight-backed fellows—a man with a face which might have deceived an angel, let alone a man like myself, unsophisticated, little used to the wiles of the gay world. This man tempted me to do what a man in my condition should not do. He tempted me to *love*. It was his sister whom he threw in my way, a beautiful girl, whom I believe from my soul was never a party to the vile plan to insult me. She was kind to me. She pitied my forlorn condition, and I, fool that I was, thought she loved me. Oh, my God!"

The hunchback dropped his head upon his hands, and bitter tears, such as a strong man in agony could shed, forced themselves through his fingers, and fell upon the hard floor. Stanton was surprised. He had not considered the deformed man capable of such feeling. The dwarf composed himself by a powerful effort, and went on:

"I had made myself rich in knowledge, for books had been my only companions until I came of age. She used to sit by me for hours, and study some lesson from the old masters, well knowing how happy it made me to have her by my side. All this time the subtle schemer was pouring into my ears his insidious flattery. 'The girl had been brought up to respect *learning*, in whatever form, and would learn to love me.' I swallowed it all, and one day, when I was driven wild by passion, I asked her to be my wife. Oh, the horror expressed in every lineament of her beautiful face, as she sprung away from me, and put up her hands to ward me off. As if I would have harmed her! As if I could have moved hand or foot, I, who was stricken as with a palsy! He had lied to me. The villain had lied. He had hoped that it might be so; that she might learn to care enough for me to marry me, and, by my fortune, to prop up his failing house. But, she had never dreamed of it.

"'Your brother said you loved me,' I pleaded at length, in extenuation of my great offense.

"'My brother is mistaken,' she said, with a little tinge of pride in her tone. 'I never gave him cause to think so. Give me leave to pass.'

"I turned aside and let her pass by, and waited there under

the trees for the man who had betrayed me to my ruin. Then came a stormy time. I upbraided him with what he had done, and in return he insulted me, called me foul names, and laughed at the idea of *his* sister ever wedding such a vile thing as I. He could not be silent, and at last he pressed me *too* far. I struck him in the face, and called on him to draw his sword. He was no coward, and in a moment the blades crossed. Isolated from all men as I had been, I had taken delight in fencing, and my master early succumbed to my potent sword. What was *he* in my hands? I beat down his point, and called on him to yield. But, the devil in his blood was up, and he repeated that opprobrious term which had first angered me. Then all seemed to change around me. Red lights danced in my eyes, and passed away, and he lay there in the pride of his strength, with a ghastly wound in his breast, which my sword had made. I swear to you, young soldier, that I did not know I was fighting until I saw him dead. The fool made me angry, and when I am angry I forget that I live—I only know enough to thrust, guard, and cut. I stood there, looking on a dead body, the body of one who had been my friend, and whom his own mad passion had destroyed. Oh, for *him*, the strife of the world was over, and he had a fierce smile on his handsome lip, even as he lay.

"Vengeance followed me. I was hunted like the deer in the forest. There was no rest given me, night or day. I left that country and came to New York, after converting my wealth into gold. But, vengeance never slept. Before I had been a year in the land, the brother of the dead man, seeking the fortune which had failed entirely when the prop upon which they had leaned, *my wealth*, was taken from them, found me here, living in the city, content with my lot. He sought me out, and demanded satisfaction for his brother's blood. I knew that if he fought me, I should kill him, and that there was too much blood of his upon my hands already. I would *not* fight. He, too, insulted me, called me *cur*, swore me, but still I would not fight. Then he left me, and began to persecute me. One night a mob came, headed by him, crying out upon me as a sorcerer, and dragged me before a justice. I was banished from the city, and I went to Albany. He would not let me rest, even there; and again I was

driven out. I went to Schenectady, and was chased out one night, with firebrands and seething pitch flung at me. Then it was that I turned my back upon mankind, foreswore their fellowship, and made a home in this remote region. If my enemy has heard of me here, thank Heaven he dare not come hither to find me. Oh, if he *dared* to come and ask for the vengeance which I once denied him, he should find me ready and *willing* to meet him."

"You say you live here alone?"

"No one else is here, I think."

"I should think you would be very lonely."

"No. I have my books, and in them I forget what I am and become the philosopher. But you do not ask me *who* this man can be who has hounded me and badgered me from place to place. The man whose name is wormwood on my lips. I repeat, you do not ask his name."

"Why should I? His name is nothing to me."

"It is much to you," replied the hunchback, rising and confronting the young man. "For his name is Simon Stanton, and he is your father."

"Mine!"

"Yes. You little thought that *he* would stoop to follow a poor outcast from post to post, to drive him *mad*, when he had suffered too much already. Boy, the death of your uncle has been repented sorely by me, from the very moment I saw him lying dead beneath my sword. I did not *mean* to kill him, God is my judge, I would not have shed his blood; but, it was his or mine. The poorest among us love life, and I, hunchbacked, deformed thing though I be, sought for mine."

"Why have you brought me here?" demanded Stanton. "You have treated me well, given me food and drink, with a place at your table. Why should you do that to one you hate?"

"Young man, the Arabs take a stranger into their tents, give him food and drink, and rob him when he goes upon his way. Why may I not do the same?"

"You will not. Besides, do you think I fear you? I am armed as well as you."

"So James Stanton thought when he measured blades with

me in England. What came of it? He lies beneath the sod to-day, while I tread it alive."

"You say my uncle's blood is on your land," cried Stanton, rising suddenly. "Draw your sword, and let us fight this quarrel where we stand. May the best man win!"

"Are you weary of your life?" the dwarf asked. "Put up your sword, young sir. If I draw mine in anger, your blood be on your head, and I have promised not to shed it."

"One pass for the honor of my family!" shouted Stanton. "Prepare!"

Caspar Decker drew his sword slowly, a sneering smile on his thin lips. Then for the first time Stanton saw that his arms were of wonderful length, and he handled his blade with the ease and grace of a master of the weapon. The bright steel crossed, and before the young man had time to think, his point was beaten down, and he was at the mercy of the dwarf. The latter allowed him to recover his weapon and began to play, cautiously circling about his antagonist like a lion waiting a chance to spring.

"I shall cut off the button at your sword-wrist," said the hunchback.

"It is impossible," said Stanton.

Thrust, parry, guard! A slight turn of Caspar's dexterous blade, and the button dropped to the floor.

"I will now cut off the button at your throat," said the hunchback, quietly, his face still wearing that sarcastic smile.

"You *can* not," gasped Stanton. They closed again, and, as before, the button dropped to the floor. Stanton threw down his sword.

"I yield," he said. "I can not fence with you."

"You must own that I did not force it on you," said Caspar, returning his sword to its sheath. "I shall be pleased to give you lessons in this art. I had your life in my hand, I did not take it. I had a reason for it. Are you quite satisfied that you can not fight with me?"

"I am."

"Take the lesson kindly. Others, more famed in arms than you, have yielded to the power of this right arm. To those who are denied some gifts, nature is prolific in others. I have the strength of three men in my arms, and my feet

are tireless on the march. I wanted to ask you. Before this you have guessed who it is I loved so well. Her name was Gertrude."

"My aunt?"

"Yes. Know you aught of her?"

"If you have any lingering feeling for her, bear it still. She is *dead*."

The hunchback threw himself prostrate and groveled on the cold floor of the cabin. His lips moved continually, though no word came from them. Stanton thought he was praying. After a little while he rose upon his knee, and an expression almost beautiful swept over his face.

"She is gone!" he said, "and I can love her as I love the angels, of whom she is the brightest. Boy, why do you tarry? Leave me alone with my dead."

"Sir?"

"You can not see her floating in the air. Your soul is corrupt and not pure. I see her—and she says, 'In the place where I dwell your robe shall be pure as any.'"

He rose suddenly. The burst of feeling was over, and he turned savagely upon his guest. "Why do you linger here, son of an accursed race? Go back to your father and tell him that Caspar Decker, the 'Little Man of the Lake,' sends him greeting. Let him not dare to come here after me. If he does, we will meet under God's blue sky and I will pay him with my good sword for the wrongs he has done me."

"It is night," said Stanton.

"Stay," replied the hunchback, "I forgot myself. Rest thee here, and the best bed I can give you shall be at your disposal. Dare you stay here, knowing what you do?"

"I trust you," replied Stanton.

"I trust no man," was the stern reply. "Sit down again. If you will take a book, do so. I am willing."

Stanton stepped to the table and took up a book. It was one he did not understand, written throughout with red ink, bearing full-page drawings of strange inventions, machinery and diagrams. Stanton, whose education had been more in arms than in letters, wearied of it soon and laid it down.

"You tire of it," said Caspar. "And yet it is the result of many hours of labor. I shall not live to see the day, but the

time will come when carriages will fly through the land, driven by such works as those. Men will never know what I have toiled to do, but some one will arise with a more fertile brain than mine, and make use of the principles which I have brought to light. Yes, the day will surely come. Hah! Go back!"

The sudden exclamation startled Stanton. He turned to ascertain its cause, and saw, standing at the open door, what seemed to him one of the most beautiful of women. She was clad in a short kirtle, after the Scotch fashion, reaching to the knee. The limbs were cased in loose Turkish trowsers fastened at the ankle above a pair of neat little moccasins. She was the personification of physical health, with a beautiful face and speaking blue eyes. Her hair was her chief glory, and flowed in untamed luxuriance about her shoulders. Stanton uttered an exclamation, and put out his hand to detain her, when she was about to glide from the door. But she disappeared like a shadow. Stanton would have followed, but the hunchback threw his long arms about him and held him fast for some moments. He then released him, and the young man ran to the door and looked without. Nothing there but darkness. The hunchback, in answer to his hasty inquiries, would tell him nothing, and he lay down to rest, the most thoroughly bewildered youth to be found in the thirteen colonies.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRIAL BY FIRE.

At early morning the young man prepared to return. His strange host was unremitting in his attentions, and filled his haversack with savory deer's-meat to sustain him on the road, acting more like a dear friend than an avowed enemy. Upon one subject, however, he was mute; no word could be elicited from him with regard to their strange guest of the previous evening, beyond the fact that he knew who she was, but would not tell whence she came or whither she went.

"She is one of those," he said, "who has been dead to the world since her birth. That world is to her a moral wilderness into which she does not care to stray. Seek not to penetrate the mystery of her life; for I swear to you that if you find her out and do her a wrong, I will kill you with as little scruple as I would slay a deer for my food; with less, for I pity every beast that falls beneath my weapon."

"Why may I not know her?" demanded Stanton. "What will induce you to grant me an interview?"

"Nothing," replied the hunchback, coldly. "Do not waste your breath, I pray you; it will be needless for your journey. Go your ways and never seek to find me out, never look upon my face again. Before two weeks, blood will flow in the valley yonder, and the first blows which shall herald the birth of a strong young nation will be struck. You will be there, striking for a new flag, who have struck good blows under the banner of England. You will be there, I say; I do not blame you; your blood is hot, and if your leaders would not laugh at the offer of such an arm as this, I would be there too. But no matter, we waste time. I give you good day."

Thus they parted. Stanton crossed the open space, passed over the neck of land and reached the place where he had met Wando on the previous evening. He found his horse where he had picketed him, and hastily prepared him for the road. While engrossed in this work, two men came into the thicket near at hand and watched him carelessly. One was an Indian, in the dress of the Mohawks, and the other a white man wearing the uniform of Johnson's Greens. It would be hard to conceive any thing more repulsive than the face of this white man. He had a square face, with heavy, massive jaws, like a bull-dog, and deep-set, glittering little eyes. A cut like that of a saber crossed his face from the inner corner of his right eye and lost itself in the heavy hair upon his neck.

"One of Gansevoort's men," he muttered, looking at the Indian.

"Ugh!" was the reply of the savage, clutching at the handle of his hatchet. "Take him scalp, eh?"

"Not yet," replied the other. "It is that cursed Stanton, and he and I have heavy scores to settle. But he will be in the saddle if we don't look out. I'll speak to him."

As the two men came from the woods, Stanton saw them, and bounded into the saddle as the safest place for a soldier. Hardly had he touched it, when the tory jerked his ride to his shoulder, and fired. It is doubtful whether he intended to fire at the horse or the man. At any rate, the steed fell as it, stricken by a lightning bolt, shot through the lead. Stanton disengaged his feet from the stirrups, and drew his pistols, at the same time, so that the tory, rushing up to secure his prize, was appalled by the apparition of two loaded pistols, presented at his head, with a determined hand ready to pull the triggers. Though a man of undoubted courage, he recoiled and opened a parley.

"Look here, Stanton, what is the use of making a fuss? You might as well surrender. I've got forty men in the bushes, and if you touch one of those devil's playthings, they will have your blood for it. Give up at once."

"You lie, Tom Goldey," replied Stanton. "You haven't a man nearer than St. Leger's forces, except Indian Joe. Move a step and I fire. How dared you shoot my horse?"

"That was lawful enough, seeing that you was trying to escape. You'll own that I might have hit you as well as the horse. Come, man, make a virtue of necessity, and yield with a good grace, or I swear when we do take you we will burn you alive."

"Wait until you take me," cried Stanton, defiantly. "Ha! keep back!"

This exclamation was excited by an attempt of the tory to get nearer. He retreated in confusion.

"I'll give you one more chance, you infernal rebel," he cried, "before I mount you. Give up them weapons and don't dally. I'm a nice fellow until you rile me up, and then you might as well play with lightning; drop them weapons, I say."

Stanton answered by a laugh which made the tory more angry. He made a signal to the Indian and they began to approach him on two sides; but he placed his back against a

huge tree and calmly awaited their movements. Both his pistols flashed fire, when he dashed the useless weapons into the teeth of Tom Goldey, nearly depriving him of those useful organs. The desperado staggered under the blow and rushed on with a howl of rage and pain. Stanton drew his sword and prepared for the unequal conflict. Indian Joe was a well known scout, the best in St. Leger's army, and Tom Goldey had been a desperate character, an Indian-fighter, a freebooter, every thing which could make him a hard fighter. But Stanton, though young, had seen service in Canada, and, until his encounter with the hunchback, had thought himself one of the best swordsmen in the province. Joe was armed with a tomahawk and knife, which he shook menacingly in the air as he came on. Tom Goldey had a sword.

"Once more," he shouted, dashing the blood from his lips; "yield, or expect no quarter."

"I will not yield," replied Stanton. "Do your worst, villain."

"That word has sealed your doom," said the Tory. "At him, Joe!"

They closed upon him together. Sparks flew from the flashing steel, and all three weapons were red in a moment. Stanton had received a cut in the shoulder. Joe's right hand hung useless at his side, for Stanton's blade had passed through and through the muscles of his arm. Tom Lad inflicted a slight cut in his antagonist's thigh. Joe dropped his tomahawk and passed round the tree. Stanton, watching his desperate antagonist in front, did not see him, until he received a fearful blow with the buckhorn handle of the knife, which stretched him senseless on the sward. When he recovered consciousness, he was bound to a tree, his weapons gone, and his enemies were binding each others' wounds, down by the edge of the lake.

"Ah, ha," cried Joe, grating his white teeth together. "You stab Joe! Joe kill you, bimby, putty soon."

Tom Goldey said nothing, but the look he sent at the young man was significant of his brutal thought. When they had finished dressing their wounds, they came to their prisoner as he stood bound to the tree.

"I am going to ask you some questions," said Tom, "and in my opinion the best thing for you to do will be to answer them directly. In the first place, how many men has the rebel colonel in the fort?"

"I don't know who you mean."

"You know your colonel, do you not?"

"Certainly."

"That is the one I mean. How many has he at the fort? Answer at once."

"Enough to send St. Leger's gang howling back from whence they came."

"Be careful," said Goldey, striking his sword-hilt. "Once for all, be careful that you do not make me angry, or you will suffer for it. How many men has Peter Gansevoort?"

"Once for all, I do not know. And if I knew, to a man, I would not tell you."

"You speak plainly, to say the least," said the ruffian, with a sneer. "Be it so, then. I will find a way to loosen that tongue of yours or to quiet it for ever."

He went a little aside and began to kindle a fire, using a flint and steel, with some dried leaves and grass for tinder. In a short time a tiny flame shot up, which he fed with bits of grass, leaves and moss, and then with small dry sticks, nursing it delicately, until it was strong enough to bear heavier wood. He worked carefully, and soon a strong flame was roaring up toward the zenith. Then he came to the tree where Stanton stood, loosened his arms and stripped him to the waist. This done, he again bound his hands firmly and had the victim ready.

"You see the fire," said this fiend in human form, pointing to the mounting flame. "Fire is a strong agent. It burns as the will of the strongest. I have heard of fools who suffered death in the flames, or who would only open their mouths to curse their tormentors, but you are not one of these. You are going to tell me how many soldiers Peter Gansevoort has at the fort."

"I am going to do nothing of the kind," said the young man, eyeing his enemy firmly. "On the contrary, you will find me made of firmer stuff than you imagine. Do your worst."

Goldey took a flaming brand out of the fire and approached the bound victim, who did not wince as the hot coal almost seared his eyebrows. The Indian looked on in devilish glee, his lips moving in some uncouth sounds which Stanton thought an invocation to the bad Manitou, the spirit of evil. He nerved himself to bear any tortures which they might find it in their hearts to inflict upon him. Goldey approached his face nearer with the flaming brand, so that the very eyelashes were singed; but he held firm.

"Let me beg of you as a friend," the tory said, evidently ill at ease in the work he had undertaken, "to make the disclosure at once. It will be better for all concerned."

"I have nothing to say," replied Stanton, setting his teeth hard.

Goldey let the flaming torch drop on his bare shoulder, and held it there for a second, burning into the flesh. The victim set his teeth harder, and one of them was broken, but still he uttered no cry. Goldey withdrew the torch and looked at him in wonder. He had never seen such fortitude displayed, even among the Indians. Again and again the torch touched exposed portions of the manly chest and shoulders with a like result. Goldey threw the brand angrily down.

"I hope you have got enough of it," he said, "and are ready to comply with my just demand."

"I am not ready," was the response. "Go on with the torture; and be sure you do your work well, villain that you are. For, if I live, and escape from your hands, I will hunt you down and kill you for this dark day's work."

"I will make a light day of it to you," roared the ruffian, now thoroughly incensed. "Bring more wood, Joe, and pile it up about him. We will see if he can keep his temper through that trial."

Both men set to work and brought wood from the forest, and built a pile about the body of the prisoner. Stanton gave himself up to his fate, for he saw that they intended to burn him alive. He called all his fortitude to his aid, and in stern silence awaited the coming doom. As Tom approached with a torch to light the pile, a rifle cracked suddenly, and the arm which bore the torch dropped to his side. A fierce oath broke from the lips of the scoundrel.

"Cut and run, Joe!" he shouted. "I'll settle this young man before we start."

He sprung at Stanton with his knife in his left hand, when Caspar Decker glided suddenly from behind a tree, sword in hand, and dealt him a staggering blow with his fist. Appalled by the sudden apparition, the tory turned and fled, leaving Caspar master of the field.

He cut the bonds which bound young Stanton to the tree, and he dropped at once senseless upon that which was to have been his death-pile. Caspar knew that the tory and Indian would return when their first fright was over, and though he did not fear them, he had no desire to meet them now; so, lifting the senseless body of the young man in his arms, he made his way to the shore. A canoe lay there, into which he at once got and paddled out into the lake. When the tory and his Indian friend ventured back, they found nothing but the dead horse, and saw a speck far out in the lake, which Joe said was the canoe which had carried away their enemy; and they were forced to proceed on their journey, satisfied that "there is many a slip 'twix the cup and the lip."

When Stanton became conscious, he was lying on a couch of soft skins, and felt a delicious sense of rest and ease. He knew that his wounds had been dressed by careful hands and his body anointed with some strange unguent, to take the soreness from his burns. As he turned uneasily, he found that he was lying in a vaulted chamber, which no man had ever fashioned. The place was lighted by pine knots thrust into crevices, and the rays lit up the points of stalactites depending from the lofty roof. The room was rudely furnished, and upon the low table he saw some of the books which he had looked over in the cabin. Near at hand Caspar sat, reading by the light of one of the knots. He looked up as Stanton moved.

"You must be very quiet," he said, kindly. "You have been badly hurt."

"Where am I?" said Stanton, gazing about him in wonder. "Am I awake or dreaming? The last I remember the flames had touched my body and I was prepared to die. You saved me!"

"I did," replied the hunchback, mildly, "nothing which any man would not have done under the circumstances. The Russians would have burned you alive."

"I shall not be ungrateful," said the young man, raising himself on his elbow and falling back through weakness.

"Yes you will," said the hunchback. "When you have lived as long in the world as I have you will no longer trust men, only to be too much deceived."

"Where am I?"

"In the other house of which I spoke. I must exact a promise of you. This place is known only to you and to one other. That other you will never see. I ask you to promise me not to reveal the secret of this place to any other. It is my city of refuge, my haven of safety. If I lose it, I lose all."

"I will never reveal it."

"Thanks. God deal with you as you deal with me. Yet I have no right to think that you will be more truthful than your fellows. I trust no man, yet I believe the foolish thing men call honor will keep you from telling my secret. Try to sleep. When you wake I shall see you again."

CHAPTER IV.

THE VISION OF THE CAVE.

STANTON woke refreshed, and found time, before his host came in, to examine into the nature of his injuries. A cut in the thigh, a blow from a hatchet in the wrist, and various burns disposed about his body. All these had been dressed in the most careful manner possible, and by the hand of one who was no novice in the healing art. By the time he had completed his self-examination, Caspar came in with a partridge, nicely broiled, and temptingly displayed upon a broad wooden plate. Wounds do not take away the appetite of a healthy young man, and Stanton soon found himself propped up by bearskins, feasting on the good things which the hunchback

brought him, who sat near at hand watching his motions with such a look on his strange face as had fallen on it when he was told that his first and only love was dead. Stanton could hardly believe him as vindictive as he said, else why had he taken so much pains to make him comfortable? When Le came in, he questioned him:

"If, as you say, you hate my race, why did you save ~~me~~ from death?"

"Shall I tell you why?" said the hunchback, hiding his face. "It was because you have ~~her~~ face and hair, the woman who is with the angels. Oh, up there, this deformed cloak I wear will be thrown aside for ever. It will no longer mask a soul which has no kin with it. God send the time quickly, yet let Him do his will."

"When you fled from England," said the young man, "have you ever thought that they might reasonably think that you killed my uncle from a malicious spirit? You were not there to deny the accusations laid upon you, and where there is no denial, people claim such things as true. I had rather a thousand *great* falsehoods should be told where I could face them down, than one of lesser import, which I could not meet."

"Perhaps you are right," replied the hunchback, gloomily. "I did not think of *that*. The face of my friend, lying dead at my feet, accused me of a great wrong. I could not stay in that country. I sinned greatly, but my atonement has been severe. Twice, while the ship was bearing me from home, I stood up to cast myself into the sea. As many times I felt a restraining hand laid upon me, and a voice saying, 'Pause; there is yet more work for you to do, and then you will die a bloody death.' I am waiting my time, and to-day I saw the instrument by which I am to fall. I saw the hand which is to lay me low."

"I do not understand you."

"Few men ever did," replied the hunchback, turning away his head. "I have a strange gift—call it what you will. I have it still—the power to look into the future. Nothing is distinct there. I see blood and carnage, battles and sieges, assaults and repulses. What care I? When all is over, I see myself, with ghastly wounds upon me, dying on the sod."

"This is but morbid melancholy," cried Stanton. "Cheer up, man! Don't be cast down! You shall live as long as any one of us yet. Why, you are as hale and strong, to-day as any man in the thirteen colonies. Cheer up!"

"Do you think I fear the death?" replied the hunchback, quickly. "No, I tell you, I *long* for it. I pray that it may come speedily. I only tell you what I *know*. Before two months have passed away, the sods of the valley shall lie upon my breast. But I have work to do in that time—much work, much work."

There was silence in the cavern for a short time, and the strange man sat with his head upon his knees. Stanton did not disturb him. He saw that his better nature was striving in him with the evil and was getting the mastery. When he looked up, the cloud had passed away from his face, and he looked cheerful and resigned.

"I said I saw yesterday the hand which was to slay me. It was the white man who was torturing you."

"Tom Goldey!"

"I did not know his name, but he is the man to destroy me. When I saw him, a thrill ran through me from head to foot, and an inward voice said, 'Behold him. Here may you see the man! What is he?'

"He is a scoundrel, who has lived a long time in the Valley of the Mohawk. A wandering vagabond, who learned his trade upon the high seas, where he got that saber-cut upon his face—a man who fears neither God nor his fellow-man—a brute, without a single spark of humanity in his breast. Murder is his trade, and he glories in it. When he chose to be placed in Johnson's Greens, he knew that these infamous traitors would be the bloodiest villains of their kind; for, o'ercast from their homes along the river, they will be more vindictive when they meet their old foes. And they are with St. Leger."

"Yes, yes; they will be cruel beyond doubt. I know the breed of the Johnson gang. When you meet them in battle, strike and spare not, for they will give no quarter. This Goldey is a type of the class. revengeful as a tiger, he will always remember you, for you have marked him for life."

"My pistols are heavy," said Stanton, laughing. "They never failed me before. If they had not, Tom Goldey would be below the sod instead of on it. And my good Lorse is gone."

"I heard the rifle-shot while in my cabin, and hastened across the neck as soon as possible. Twice I raised my rifle to shoot that fellow, and as many times I dropped it. I could not fire. Are you comfortable?"

"Very, thanks to your care. What time is it?"

"About nine in the morning. I have been to the cabin and back since sunrise. There were many things there which were needed for your comfort."

"I should not think you would dare to leave your cabin so exposed."

"What danger is there? The Indians call me Great Medicine, and fear to enter, and there is nothing in the cabin to tempt the cupidity of the whites. They would find little to repay them in a few useless tables and chairs. No, there is little fear that they will trouble my cabin. The lint must be dry upon your wrist. Let me attend to it."

He removed the bandage, put a new supply of the ointment upon it, and replaced it with careful hands. He showed great skill, too, in applying the unguents to his burns.

"Where did you learn so much of medicine?" asked Stanton, when his wounds were dressed and he was lying down again.

"Where I obtained my knowledge of other things with which I have surprised you. My life is solitary. I have little else to do, and books are a great comfort to me. My practice is simple. I use none of the drugs with which apothecaries kill their patients; only simple herbs, whose qualities I have proved, roots, and cold water are my medicines. The unguent upon your burns I made myself. The ointment on your wrist and thigh is an extract from a plant which grows not twenty feet from the mouth of this cave."

"How long must I lie here?"

"If it were not for the wound in your thigh, I would have you up in three days. As it is, you shall not move for ten."

"Oh, I must be out before that time. I have much to do."

"You shall not move. Why should you?"

"I have news for Gansevoort. He does not know that St. Leger is at hand."

"He does," replied Caspar, calmly.

"How?"

"I sent him word."

"By whom?"

"It matters not. It is enough that Peter Gansevoort is even now strengthening his fortifications and preparing for the coming of the foe. He is a brave man, and will save the fort in spite of St. Leger and his savage allies. This Goldey and his comrades are forerunners of his force."

"Pray God that some of my men may seize them and hang them to the nearest tree. The Whigs of Tryon would shed few tears when they heard of his fate. Let me but meet him once more, and I will make him curse the day he tortured me."

"The time will come," said the hunchback. "You are appointed to avenge me. I shall fall by his hand; he shall die by yours."

"I hope your prophecy may come true, as to the last part; but, for the first part, I pray that you may be as lying a prophet as ever talked. Do you live much in this dreary place?"

"This is my reception-room," answered Caspar, smiling. "There are others at your choice if you see proper to take them. I seldom stay here in the summer; but in winter it is a merry place. Here I sit with my books, dreaming of the time when vaporized water shall be a ruling power. You smile. You will not believe, as I do, that it is possible for that which lifts the lid of a kettle or bursts all bonds to escape, to drive powerful machinery. Yet it will, it will. Not in our day, but in the days of our children after us. All men shall bow down to the mighty power of steam."

"It may be so," said Stanton, musingly. "There is great fire in steam. I drove a plug into the nose of a kettle once upon a time, and fastened down the lid. The steam drove the plug across the room and escaped; but how will you control it?"

"I will yet find that," replied the dwarf. "You embolden me to show you something upon which I have worked long. my darling scheme; not to give it to the world - I

never thought of that; but for my own amusement. Let me prop you up with the bearskins, and you can see better."

He dragged a low table into the center of the room, and then from a dungeon-like cavity in the wall, he pulled out an oblong box of some strong wood and lifted from it a non-descript invention. How the machinists of our day would have laughed if they could have seen it, and yet it was the germ of that which the genius of Watt and of stout Geordie Stevenson afterward perfected, the steam-engine. It was silent now, an inert mass of steel and brass and iron. Stanton looked at him with wondering eyes as he opened the door of a little furnace and began to cram in bits of fine wood and then larger pieces. These he lighted, and waited, with breathless anxiety, the result. He pulled a stop here, and a pan there as the steam began to fill the chest, when lo! the inert mass began to move, and stretch out its long arms toward the couch upon which Stanton lay. For a moment he was tempted to believe that the enemies of the dwarf were right, and that he was indeed a sorcerer. But science came to his aid, and showed him that this was a possibility. There was the grim engineer moving about his pet creation, watching it with the tender care of a parent, and pulling the stops by which he regulated the actions of the machine. It was clumsy, incomplete, with a dozen useless appendages and many deficiencies, but it was an *engine* for all that, and it moved! That was the rub. Lying there, watching the revolutions of the little wheels, Stanton never dreamed that the day was so near that should make steam all-powerful. Perhaps the grim engineer had his dreams, but they never approached the reality.

"That will do," said the hunchback, turning a lever which shut off the steam. "That will do, my pet; rest thee a while."

He put the machine in its box, and replaced it in the niche in the wall. From that time, during the period of the wounded man's convalescence, they talked often of machinery. On the tenth day, when the hunchback was away, Stanton rose, and finding himself strong enough, set out to explore the **cave**. The room in which he was placed was perhaps twenty

feet on each side, hung with stalactites in every direction. He took one of the lighted knots from the wall and left the room. The path led him up an inclined plane to another room, smaller than the one he had just left, but better lighted, for a few stray gleams of daylight penetrated that somber place and made it quite cheerful compared with the other room. It was more neatly fitted up, too, and had a sort of carpet of beaverskins. At one end a curtain formed of the same material was closely drawn. Various books and manuscripts were on the table, and, to his surprise, many articles of use only to ladies. He stepped from side to side, examining each article with great curiosity, when he heard a soft voice calling from behind the curtain.

"I am coming directly," it said.

He turned, staring in stupid amazement at the curtain, when it was suddenly drawn aside and the beautiful girl who had surprised him in his visit to Caspar at the cabin, came out into the room. At the sight of him she uttered a low cry, sprung behind the curtain and drew it quickly into its place. Mad with doubt, he had laid his hand upon it, and was about to draw it aside, when a voice cried aloud,

"Hold your hand! Why are you here?"

It was the dwarf. He was visibly excited, and his hands trembled as he laid them on the young man and led him away from the curtain.

"What would you do?" he cried. "It is a new character for the chivalrous Captain Stanton—that of a spy. What do you seek?"

"I beg your pardon," said Stanton, humbly, "I have seen that vision of beauty whom I have met once before, and I must see her again, I *must* speak to her."

"A vision of beauty? Ha, ha! You are crazy," said the dwarf. "You saw nothing whatever."

"I did."

"You did not."

"I swear I saw her, and she is behind that curtain now."

"You think so?"

"I know it. I heard her voice as well as beholding her person."

"Then you are at liberty to look behind it. If you find any one, I shall be surprised."

Stanton drew aside the curtain and saw a couch of skins lying in disorder upon the floor. But, the place was empty. He looked about him in silent amazement. Where had she gone? Through the impassable rock? There was no other way; not an outlet appeared in the solid mass. The expression of ludicrous amazement brought a smile to the face of the hunchback.

"Have you found what you seek?" he asked.

"I have not," replied Stanton, much puzzled. "But she went in here, for all that."

"Your wounds have had a bad effect on you. You can see plainly that no one is here."

"There is no one here now," replied the young soldier, still in a puzzled tone. "But, I will take my oath that I saw her."

"No doubt a phantom of a diseased brain," said the hunchback, confidently. "Return to your bed. I will give you a draught, and you shall soon be ready to return to your duty. I go on a secret mission, which no man knows but myself and one other, and you can not remain here."

"I am ready to go," answered Stanton, proudly. "I have been too long a burden to you. I assure you that I feel deeply the obligation I am under to you. My life was in your hands, and you saved it. I will not forget it."

"You will do no more than that which He hath appointed you to do," replied the hunchback, with a touch of sadness in his voice. "God in the beginning appointed to each man his place of action on the earth. I have mine. You have yours. Come, go back to bed, and I will give you a cooling draught."

"As I stand here, I swear I saw her!" cried Stanton.

"No doubt you think so. Come, you are very feverish."

CHAPTER V.

THE VISION.

SCARCELY had the forms of the two men disappeared down the slope, when the curtains about the couch were lifted, and the beautiful face which had already caused the young man so much trouble looked out. Seeing that the room was quite empty, she came from her hiding-place, and peered after the dwarf and his companion. Apparently she was in fear that the young man would return, for she started at every footfall, and prepared to spring again behind the curtains. She had been hidden somewhere near at hand, or she could not have reached the place so quickly after they left it. Her movements were full of grace without a touch of art. With her beautifully chiseled form poised in an attitude of profound attention, she was a study for a painter. Her hair was only bound at the temples by a small wampum belt, and allowed to sweep in all its magnificence about her figure. Darting to the opening with a bird-like swiftness, she listened to the voices of the two men in the cavern below. In a few moments the voices ceased, and one of the men was heard coming back. It was the dwarf. She did not appear to be a stranger to him, for a smile lighted up her face, and she pushed forward a stool for him to sit down. He took it and regarded her with strange intentness for some moments, and then broke out with the Moslem proverb,

"What will be, will be."

"Why do you say that, father?" she asked, drawing a bear-skin to his feet and seating herself upon it.

"I was thinking, Sela, that the time is near at hand when you must go out into the wilderness of the world and learn what it is. You will learn there what I am; that your affection for me, and I believe it is sincere, is misplaced; that you have no right to be kind to a hunchback, one upon whom the ban of the law is laid. Oh, my darling, in the coming days, when I am in my grave, think kindly of me, for whatever my failings in other things, I have been true to thee."

"Father," said the girl, drawing near to him, and clasping his knees, "though all the world should forsake you, I should be true to you still; I should love you and believe you a good and true man. I never think of your deformed body, I know you have a soul which is true and a heart which is noble. Since the day you took me up, an outcast child in the streets of London, I have believed in you, honored you, loved you, and I shall go on loving you till my dying day."

He extended his hands and she took one and kiss'd it. The poor hunchback was not without a friend. For a while neither spoke, but the eyes of the deformed were lifted to heaven—the beautiful eyes, so much like the mother's who bore him.

"You were discovered by our guest," said he, fondling her hand.

"Yes," she answered; "I heard some one walking about, and thinking it was you, I came out. The moment I saw him I sprung back into the recess and got into the passage. He came in to look for me, did he not?"

"Yes; but I convinced him that he was laboring under a delusion. You must be more careful, Sadia. I do not wish him to know you, at least not at present. Some time I hope you will come together. What do you think of him?"

"Oh, father, you have kept me here as Miranda was kept by Prospero, made me learned in all studies, and yet I have no knowledge of what the men of the world can be. He seems to me a perfect man. You must not blame me, for, except yourself and the Indians who sometimes pass by, I do not see a man."

"I do not blame thee, child," replied the other. "Far from it. I am to blame. This is a fine, stout youth, though there are others who surpass him far. But this is ill. I am going away upon a mission which will keep me a full week. In the mean time remain within the cave; I would not have you seen for worlds. I am glad I taught thee not to fear solitude, or you would be afraid to remain here."

"I fear not," she said.

"That is well," he answered. "I wish to have you put up a haversack of food for this young man. He goes with me a part of the way."

"Does he know the entrance to the cave?" she asked.

"No; he was senseless when I brought him here," was the reply.

"Shall you show it to him?"

"I must; but I can trust him. He will not betray it to others. I have studied the youth well; he is of a warm, impulsive nature, quick in his likes and dislikes, a firm friend, a bad enemy, and, take him all in all, a good man."

The girl listened without saying a word. She had not been insensible to the noble bearing of young Stanton, even while she fled from him in compliance with her father's wishes. She did not really sustain that relationship to him. He had found her, ten years before, a child wandering alone in the streets of London, and pitying her he had taken her under his protection. The child grew up in his care, seeing no one else, for he had at once set sail for the New World, and had learned to love him for his good qualities. He had taken great pleasure in instructing her in the studies of which he was master, and she had been an apt scholar. One point only he was determined on, and that was that she should see no men. More for this end than any other he had taken her to this wild region, where they lived together as father and child.

"And must you go?" she said softly. "I shall not fear for myself, my dear father, but I shall fear for you. The forest is full of danger, the bear and panther creep through it, and serpents crawl over the slimy stones. I have seen many Indians in the woods, too. Are you not afraid of them?"

"No, my daughter. I shall not die by the hand of an Indian. My fate is marked out; but listen to what I say. You must not be seen by these roving bands. They are on the war-path, and spare neither age nor sex. Keep within the cabin all the time. If one of these red scoundrels saw you, your fate would be a sad one. You will remember what I say?"

"I will."

"You have your rifle. Is it in good order?"

"I have not fired it for more than three weeks."

"Bring it here."

She sprung up quickly, and brought him a beautiful little

gun, inlaid with silver. He had bought it for her from a trader, and had taught her its use so well that she had rivaled her master at short range. He cleaned it carefully, after extracting the load, loaded it again, and gave it back to her.

"I will leave you the horn of powder and the bullets I molded," he said. "Pray Heaven you may not have to use them. Now good-by, my darling, and God keep you safe until I return."

She kissed him, and went into the little curtained recess, weeping. He looked after her a moment, dashed a tear from his own eyes, and then, taking up his rifle, he hurried down the slope to the lower cavern. He found his guest asleep and woke him. Stanton looked up with a start.

"Come, sir," said the hunchback, "I have changed my mind. We must be on our way to-day."

"What time is it?" asked Stanton, rising from the couch, yawning and rubbing his eyes. "I thought you said we would not go until to-morrow."

"That would be a day lost," the other said. "You wish to get back to your company. I have work to do, and can lose no time."

"I am satisfied to go," replied Stanton, buckling his sword-belt as he spoke. "But I should like to know who that beautiful creature is whom I saw in the upper room. Come, Caspar, be good enough to tell me where she is hidden."

"You still cling to that chimera," said Caspar, angrily. "I have told you time and again not to ask me questions about her. I am ready. Are you coming?"

"I am looking for my sword."

"It is in the corner yonder."

Stanton found his weapon, and they set out together. Passing through the upper room, where Stanton looked in vain for the vision, they turned into a gloomy passage, through which Caspar led his companion by the hand. It was a strange place. They were in utter darkness, and a damp air was blowing in their faces. Caspar did not speak a word, and Stanton, as man is apt to do when he finds himself helpless, was silent also. Gloomy thoughts passed through his mind. What if the sly hunchback had decoyed him here to slay him! He dismissed the unworthy thought before it was

formed, and trudged on behind his host. They turned a sharp angle, and began to ascend, until they stopped on a flat rock at the mouth of an opening not more than three times the size of a man's body.

"Are we to go through that place?" asked Stanton, in some dismay.

"Yes," replied the hunchback; "strap your rifle over your shoulder, so that the muzzle will drag behind. That will do. Now follow me."

The small man dropped upon his hands and knees, and crawled into the narrow opening. Stanton followed him, and they crawled in this manner for over a hundred feet, when the passage widened, and enabled them to go forward stooping. The ascent became steep, and at last they found their further progress stopped by a huge block of limestone.

"What does this mean?" cried Stanton. "We are in a trap. We can go no further."

The hunchback smiled, and placing his hand upon the stone, pushed it gently aside. It had been so arranged as to move easily in the right direction, and they passed out together. Looking about him, Stanton was surprised to find that they were on the top of a little mound, formed of broken fragments of limestone, such as are often seen in this section. Not far off was the clearing in which stood the house where he had first visited the dwarf.

"You have a strange retreat," he said.

"It is a safe one," was the answer. "What enemy dare follow me through those dark passages? No man can pass certain points without alarming those within. So that, in case the entrance was found, bells will ring at the entrance, in the narrow passage, and in the dark path over which I led you first. You ask how this is done, and I answer that deer-skin ropes are so stretched across the passages, that no one can pass without disturbing them and ringing the bells. For these cords are so taut and connect with bells at the two entrances."

"It is wonderful. But is there no other passage?"

"There is."

"Where is it?"

"Can I trust you?"

"With life itself."

"It is in the cellar of my cabin. From it you can pass at once into the upper room, where you were wandering when I found you to-day. How do your wounds feel?"

"A little stiff, but growing better, thanks to your skill."

They descended the mound, and crossed to the house. Here they found two trappersacks filled with corn-bread and bacon, with some jerked venison, which some provident fairy had left ready for their use in the main room. Beside that of the dwarf was a small piece of paper, closely written, which he glanced over quickly, and placed in his bosom. He then packed up some other trifling necessaries, and the two set out together. They crossed the same neck of land which we have mentioned before, and reached the place where Stanton had fought with the tory and the Indian. A man was lying on the greenward near that memorable tree, who rose as they advanced, and showed them the expressive face and striking figure of Wando the Oneida. He had evidently been waiting for them, and greeted his young friend with more warmth than is often shown by an Indian. At the same time he looked at the dwarf as if in doubt whether to regard him as a friend or an enemy.

"How came you here, Wando?" said Stanton. "I am very glad to see you."

"T'onght you dead, *sure*," replied the Indian. "Wando very mad. Dat Indian Joe do it. Me kill him, some day."

"He was not any more to blame than Tom Goldey."

"Me kill him, too."

"I hope you may. But you have not told me why you are here."

Wando glanced at the hunchback.

"It is easily explained," replied the latter. "I met Wando and told him where you were and asked him to meet us here. He is a faithful fellow, and was very sorry to hear that you were hurt."

"Why you do dis?" demanded Wando, laying his hand upon the arm of the dwarf. "Tudder day, you say you hate cappen—him your enemy. Dis day you save him life, shoot Tom, and drive him 'way. Den you make him well?"

"You will not understand me. We are no longer enemies."

"Bury Hatchet? No dig him up no more, eh?"

"Yes," replied the dwarf.

"Good! Den we frens, too. Wando fren to *cappen's* frens always. Cappen good man."

"We must not idle away our time in speeches," said Caspar, sharply. "You are going back to your people. There you will see your father, perhaps. You can say to him that a miserable Lunchback, one he has hounded from every spot where his dire I foot had found a resting-place, has at last found a refuge in the dens and caves of the earth, and saved his son's life when he had only to stand idle and see him die a horrible death. I might have done it, and never after have known a quiet hour. My evil genius was crying out to my heart, 'Let him die. Thus may you be avenged on your enemy.' I did not do it. I thank God I did not do it, and I saved your life. Remember it, and never strike me through one I love dearly."

"I will be true to you," was the reply.

"Then we part here. My way lies yonder," pointing to the east, "and yours is there. Go on your way with this assurance: that the wild Lunchback does not hate you as he has good cause to hate your father."

They parted, the lunchback starting off at a lope, like an Indian, with his trusty rifle slung across his arm, going eastward, while Stanton and the Indian, after seeing him out of sight, turned their steps to the south, in the direction of old Fort Schuyler.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARING FOR BATTLE.

PETER GANSEVOORT, the colonel commanding at the fort, was a man of rare military power. His scouts had brought him word that St. Leger had broken off from the main body of the British army and turned his steps westward. There

could be little doubt that he intended to strike at the fort, which was one of the most important stations on the river. Situated, as it was, in the midst of the Indian country, it secured that section from inroad, by its *moral* support, more than any real good which a small garrison could do against a powerful force like that which the Six Nations could send into the field. The fort was built at the head of navigation on the Mohawk river, and was originally named Fort Stanwix. At this point there was a portage to Wood Creek, from which boats passed to Oswego. The site of the fort is now covered by the town of Rome, in Oneida county. Many persons are apt to confound this fort with a *Fort Schuyler* which occupied the site of the city of Utica, but which, though of some importance in the French wars, had gone to decay before the Revolution. The fort stood near the road to the city of Albany, with a cedar swamp on the west, and a branch of the Mohawk on the south, and surrounded by cultivated meadows and cleared lands. St. Leger was well chosen for this important expedition, being a man of good military education and of strong sense. His forces included, among others, the infamous Johnson's Greens and the Indians commanded by the chieftain Brant, who had entered heart and soul into the cause of Great Britain. This truly great chief, though an enemy to our cause, was at least a consistent one. He had been educated by the English, had received honors from the king, and deemed himself in honor bound to fight in his cause. Like Tecumseh, he had a noble nature, far above that of the Johnsons and other tory families of the valley. But he had been associated with them from childhood, and reverenced the name of old Sir William, now dead, and transferred his affection to his son and sons-in-law. It was about the third of August, when St. Leger, coming down upon the fort, camped on the bank of the Mohawk and retired to rest. Soon after, he was called up by the arrival of a couple of scouts he had sent out. He ordered them brought into his presence. The foremost was the reprobate Tom Goldey, whose arm was in a sling, and Indian Joe, who held his wounded arm with his disengaged hand. Both were tattered and torn by brier and bush.

"Good heavens!" cried St. Leger, "what is the trouble with

you? One would think you had been having a battle with wildcats."

"Just as bad," said Gordey, in his hoarse voice. "We have had a turn-up with the devil."

"The devil you have!" said St. Leger, laughing. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I say," replied Tom, savagely.

"Explain yourself," said St. Leger. "You speak in riddlea."

"I will try to be plain," said Tom. "After we had reconnoitered the fort, we were on our way back, when we met an officer of Gansevoort's on the shore of Oneida Lake. He is one of the favorite officers in the regiment—Stanton by name."

"Ah, indeed! Why did you not take him prisoner?"

"We did so," replied Tom. "I shot his horse through the head, and after a sharp tassel, in which Joe got his wound, we mastered him and tied him to a tree. I had a mind to make him confess how many rebels Gansevoort had with him, and we were engaged in this work when I got a shot in the arm."

"From whom?"

"You shall hear. I turned in the direction of the shot, and saw a horrible thing, what it was I know not, bounding down the little slope toward us. It was not more than three feet long, with arms and legs as large as those of an ordinary man, and a long tail reaching to his knees. This thing had a sword which it brandished in the air with fearful yell's. I am no coward. You can certify to that; and yet I ran. So did Joe. And when we mastered our courage to go back, our prisoner was a lost man."

"Peculiar! I would have given any thing to have taken your Stanton. I know him, and hope to gain him to the loyal cause."

"You can't do that," said Tom. "There is hardly a better man in the country of Schenectady. Ask Joe who this was who saw. You will believe him. The Indian says he has seen him before."

"When was it?" asked St. Leger, addressing the Indian.

"Joe been on war-path, one day, down by the lake, and he

come out hole in de groun'. Joe scare bad--awful bad. Jim run!"

"Who is he?"

"Little Black Man of the Lake," said Joe. "Great Medicine. Good to Indian. Nebber hurt no one 'less dry hurt him. Joe don't want make Little Black Man mad, else him kill Joe."

"How long has he lived there?"

"Joe not know. He 'fraid of Little Black Man. No go dere. Got heap of wampum down dere under groun', Injun say."

"Wampum?"

"Money, he means," said Tom, his eye gleaming with aroused cupidity. "Who told you that, Joe?"

"Injun. Got hurt. Little Black Man take care of him. No hurt him. Good to Injun. Let him 'lone. Joe no go dere no more."

"Have you found out any thing about the fort?" said St. Leger.

"To tell the whole truth," said Tom, with a crestfallen look, "we come back about as bare as we went out. Gansevoort has his scouts lying through the woods, and we barely escaped being taken once. If they had got me, it would have been 'short shift and sudden cord,' for the Schoharie county whigs have no love to waste on Tom Golley, curse them! I have escaped them once or twice by the very skin of my teeth, and it will go hard but I can keep out of their clutches yet."

"Did you find any traces of your prisoner when you came back after running away from one man?" sneered St. Leger.

"Sir," said Golley, angrily, "I did my best. No man could do more. I am an officer and a gentleman, and do my duty as such. But if my humble efforts are not appreciated, then I must beg leave to resign my commission and seek service elsewhere."

"You are too hasty, Lieutenant Golley," said St. Leger, seeing that he had gone too far. "I meant nothing derogatory to your character, and I know that you have done good service. I am very sorry this prisoner escaped your hands, for

various reasons. In the first place, he is a relative of mine, and I would not see him engaged in this rebellion. Then if I could win him over to our cause, he would be of great service to us, as his influence in this country is great."

"Win him over if you can," said Goldey, between his set teeth. "But if you do not, and while he remains a rebel, he is my enemy to the death. His father is the man who had me beaten in the market-place, not seven years ago. I have marked the family from that hour."

"Private revenges must sleep when the public good requires it," said St. Leger. "But if I fail to move him, and he remains a rebel after the inducements I shall hold out to him, he is then yours, to do with as you please. I will not step between you and your revenge. But you have not answered my question."

"When we went back there was a canoe on the lake which I had not seen before. I think they were there, for there was no other way in which he could be removed so quickly."

The conversation was a long one, after which the surgeon came in and attended to the wants of the wounded men. At early morning they were on the march, and on the morning of the sixth invested the fort. The regulars, few in number, compared with their allies, took a position on the north and east of the fort, along the verge of the heavy timber, and threw up strong redoubts facing the works. To the east of this they formed an outstretched camp, and in front of all a line of batteries, bearing upon Fort Schuyler. A portion of the regulars formed a camp south of the fort, flanked by the cedar swamp on one side, and by the Mohawk river on the other, a very strong position. The loyalists, under Sir John and Sir Guy Johnson, occupied the main road to Albany. The Indians divided their forces, a part taking position on the southern bank of the river below the smallest camp of the regulars, while the rest, and by far the greater portion, posted themselves in the rear of the cedar swamp. Brandt was sulky, for he thought that the expedition had not been carried on in the right manner.

But three days after, Herkimer, having gathered the militia of the country, marched to relieve the fort. An ambuscade was laid for him at Oriskany. All know the history of that

dreadful battle, where former friends and brothers died grappling at each other's throats; where Herkimer sat calmly after he had received his death-wound, and gave orders to his men; where Brandt raged like a lion over the bloody field, and won himself a name. Somewhat satisfied with the result, the savage chieftain entered into the siege with more spirit. St. Leger had before sent a summons to the fort, after the style of those days. He pointed out the fact that many of the Indians under his command had lost friends in action, and showed that if the fort was taken it would be impossible to restrain them. Colonel Gansevoort responded that it would be impossible for him to surrender. That the threat of using the bad passions of the Indians against them, in case they resisted, so far from being an inducement to surrender, was an incentive to fight on. For the colonel argued that, if St. Leger distrusted his influence over the savages so much, what right had *they* to think he had any influence over them *at all?* They would be as likely to slaughter their prisoners if they did *not* fight as if they *did*. This manner of reply not suiting St. Leger, he commenced a regular siege, and opened with his light batteries on the fort. The loyalists were proud of their achievements at Oriskany, and watched the roads with care, so that no one got through. St. Leger knew that the fiery Arnold was in the lower country, gathering a force to fight with him, and he wished to take the place as soon as possible. But to all his overtures Colonel Gansevoort returned the same answer. He was placed there to defend the fort, and he meant to do so while a man of his regiment stood by him. St. Leger then asked an interview with his cousin, Samuel Stanton, and was told that it was impossible for Samuel Stanton to see him. This was strictly true, for the young captain had not yet arrived at the fort, as he had only left the cavern on the morning of the fourth. But he was hourly expected, and in fact was at that very moment lying perdu in the woods, waiting for the night. Wando was still with him, and, seeing that they could do nothing in the day-time, had found a cosy shelter beneath the upturned root of a fallen tree, where they lay all day. Indians passed them now and then, taking game into camp, but failed to see them. Among others, they saw Indian Joe, and Stanton felt a thrill nearly akin to fear as he

thought what might be their fate if they fell into the hands of such a man. Wando only fingered his hatchet and expressed in dumb-show how much he would delight in taking the scalp of his enemy. But night came at last, and they determined to make the attempt to pierce the camp of the enemy, and reach the fort. During the day they had ascertained that the camp which lay in front was that of the Indians under Brandt. It was decided to find the place where the camp joined that of the English, and slip through. It was a perilous undertaking, at best, but Stanton preferred to be captured by civilized men if he was to be taken at all. Before they started, Wando made a proposition.

"S'pose we both get took, what good dat do?" he said.

"We must not both be taken."

"Den don't let both go togedder. Den if dey take one, dey take both. Tudder way, *maybe* one get troo, *maybe* both."

"You are right," said Stanton. "We will separate. Which way will you go?"

"Jes where you say."

"Then you go through here. I think it is the safest."

"No *want* sayest. Wando don't," said the generous savage. "You go here. Wando go near his own people. If Brandt take him, good, great chief do it. If white men take *you*, no burn you. Had 'nough fire, gues."

So it was decided, and as soon as it became dark enough, they slipped out of their biding-places and, keeping together, crept near enough to the Indian lodges to make out where the camp-fires stood. The time had come to separate. The two had been in many dangers together, had suffered together, and neither knew what the other's fate would be. There was a silent pressure of hands, and then they took separate ways. Both had many dangers to encounter before they met again.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE TOILS.

LET US follow the fortunes of Stanton. When he separated from the Indian, he crept forward with great caution until he saw the lights of the English camp-fires close at hand, and could even hear the tramp of the sentries, as they paced to and fro on their rounds. The redoubts had been thrown across an open meadow, reaching down to the water's edge. On the other side of the narrow stream he could see the Indian lodges by the light of their camp-fires. Stealing noiselessly down to the bank of the stream, he looked about for a canoe, and found one at last, drawn up on the shore. He looked for the paddles; they had been removed. While hesitating, he heard a heavy tread, and dropped out of sight among the reeds which grew along the bank. It was the sentry, and the polished musket gleamed in the pale moon-beams; for the moon, much to his chagrin, had risen in full splendor, making the camp-fires look dim. Stanton began to wish himself back in the cave or safe in the fort. He lay perfectly quiet until the sentry turned back upon his beat, and then pushed the canoe from the shore. He had no time to look for paddles again, but trusted to the impetus he gave it to take him out into the current. As he threw himself into the canoe, the sentry turned and saw that it had got adrift. He never suspected that it had an occupant, and saw it spin away from the shore with the exclamation, "There goes the chief's canoe."

It was, indeed, the craft of Brandt, who had come over for an interview with St. Leger. But there were sharper eyes than those of the sentry watching it—no others than those of Indian Joe, the companion of Tom Goldey, who happened to be on the bank a little further down the stream. With the natural cunning of his race, he did not raise an alarm, but ran swiftly down the stream until he reached a point below the canoe. Before it floated past, he had sunk from view beneath

the water. Stanton had not raised his head, confident, from his knowledge of the river, that the canoe would keep the middle of the stream. He floated on in silence for some moments, until he thought he had gone far enough to reach the point where he intended to land. Raising his head, he found the canoe suddenly upset, and himself struggling in the water. The subtle Indian had been swimming close to the boat, guiding it with his hand, so that they were in the shallow water, close to the bank. The moment he struck the water, the savage threw himself forward, and they grappled. Stanton noticed that the Indian winced as he seized him by the wounded wrist, and remembered the blow he had given him. He wrench'd the arm so vigorously that he was able to turn his antagonist and seize him by the throat. But the savage was an able and desperate villain, and he slipped from the grasp of the other, throwing his wounded arm about his neck in such a way that he could not injure it, though the warm blood was flowing from the newly-open'd wound and falling on Stanton's bare neck. No one but an Indian would have thought of using that wounded arm so soon after it had been used. The battle went on without a sound, except the panting and breathing of the struggling men. So silently, indeed, that the sentry, not a hundred yards away, heard nothing of it, and continued to pace his rounds. Neither of the two had yet been able to use their arms. Indeed, neither had arms, except their knives. For Stanton had left his rifle in the covert where they had staid that day, and his pistols had been rendered useless by the water. On the other hand, Joe, who had come over with Brandt, had left his arms in the tent of St. Leger, as that person expressed a wish to talk with Brandt alone. But with each a hand clasped about his antagonist, and the other wrist of the savage locked in Stanton's iron grip, there was no chance to draw a weapon, so that it was a question of bodily strength. Suffering little from fresh-healed burns, the slight wound in his thigh having quite healed, the white man was more than on a par with the Indian; besides he had a stouter physique by nature. Joe fought on with a steady fortitude greatly to his credit, though he was losing blood fast. Stanton could see that he was growing weaker, and loosened his right hand to grasp him by the throat again.

Joe's hand instantly sought his knife, and Stanton was only roused to a sense of his danger, when he felt the point glance from a rib on his right side, inflicting a ragged though by no means dangerous wound. It was a moment for desperate expedients. Seizing the armed hand again, Stanton forced it down into the water, and pushed it under his knee in such a position that it was impossible to release it. Then his hand sought his knife, and Joe uttered a piercing cry, which was echoed by the savages who had come over with Brandt. Stanton heard the coming steps, and knew that he had not a moment to lose. Dashing his clenched fist into the face of his enemy, he threw off his relaxing grasp and sprung to his feet. Seeing the gleam of the sentry's musket as he brought it to a level, he bounded into the stream just as the ball whistled over the water. The camp was aroused, and a dozen canoes pushed off from the shore. But Stanton did not rise. Knowing well by the cries he heard, as he plunged in, that the warriors below were on the alert, he swam under water until he could rise under the long reeds which lined the shore, to which he held, and waited. He was not twenty feet from the spot where they were lifting Joe out of the water, stunned, but only half conquered, "scotched, not killed." The moment he could get breath, he shouted that Stanton was not far away, and the search began. A line of canoes were placed along the center of the stream, provided with Jack lights, by which the whole surface of the stream was visible for a great distance. At the same time they began to beat the reeds along the shore. Some were of the opinion that he had been hit by the shot of the sentry. Prominent among those having this opinion was the sentry *himself*, who was quite certain that he had shot him through the head. The subject of all this remark kept quiet, certain that he would be taken ultimately, but determined not to show himself until the very last moment. It could not long be deferred. The beaters came nearer and nearer, and at last a stalwart regular thrust aside the reeds and pushed his bayonet among them. In some way wholly unexplainable, he stepped over the body of Stanton, as he lay with only his head above water, and passed on. The concealed man held his breath, hoping against hope, that the Indians, who were following close

behind the soldier, would also pass him. But, the first savage who looked into the covert uttered a shrill cry, which called to his aid the others, and Stanton, seeing that concealment was useless, rose and gave himself up to the enemy. Tom Goldey was the first man to lay a hand upon him. He gave utterance to a malignant hiss. The day of his revenge had come. The word was:

"Spy!"

"Liar!" replied Stanton. "I am no spy. Who is your commander?"

"Barry St. Leger."

"My cousin," said Stanton, with a sigh of relief. "I shall have good treatment."

The capture had taken place in the open space near the tent in which Joseph Brandt and the colonel were holding their conference. They had rushed out at the first alarm, and stood near the door. Seeing that the prisoner was taken, they now advanced. St. Leger's face wore a stern expression, while that of Brandt, strange as it may seem, had a touch of pity in it. He came near, and extending his hand, grasped that of the prisoner. Neither spoke a word. They had been dear friends. According to a custom prevalent among the Mohawks, Brandt had taken Stanton as his friend when he was in the Provincial army. Since then they had been separated, and had not seen one another for many months.

"My brother," said Brandt, laying his hand impressively upon the shoulder of the young man, "it is many days since I have looked upon your face, and my heart has been sad at parting with you. There was always a very warm corner in the heart of Thayandanegea for his good white brother, Stanton. I am very sorry you are here to-night."

"Cousin," replied Stanton, unconsciously imitating the lofty tone assumed by the Indian. "I am not sorry to see the face of Joseph Brandt, for I know by that I have a dear friend here. Why has the Mohawk hid his face so long from his white brother?"

"There were two paths in the woods," said the great Mohawk, slyly. "Stanton has chosen one. It is not that which Thayandanegea can tread. He loves his father, the king,

he has been very good to the chief. But, Stanton is still the friend of the chief. Why did you come here to-night?"

"I was trying to make my way into the fort."

"I am sorry to see you here, Samuel," said St. Leger. "Come into the tent. Lieutenant, we relieve you of your prisoner for the present. Double the guard outside, and be ready to take charge of him in the contingency which may arise. Chief, will you go with us?"

Brandt inclined his head, and the three passed into the tent together.

"You must give me your word of honor that you will not attempt to make your escape, Samuel," said St. Leger.

"I give it for the *present*," replied Stanton. "How long I may consent to keep quiet is another matter. I am not here from any desire of mine. It is the fault of your Indians that I am here at all."

At this moment a long, wailing cry came ringing into the tent, from the Indian camp across the river. It was followed by a series of sharp yells, a shot or two, and then loud whoops. Brandt inclined his ear and listened to the clamor, while St. Leger watched him until he should be ready to explain himself. He turned to Stanton.

"You were not alone in the woods?"

Stanton hesitated and finally said no.

Good. Thayandanegea knew it. The cry you heard came from my warriors; it is the death cry! They have found the dead body of a chief, and the scalp is not on his head. The hand of an Oneida did it. *Wando* is in the woods."

Stanton started!

"My men have been slow, and he has escaped; but he has left his mark so that they can know him. This is not well, my friend. I must go to my children; they are in sorrow and they cry aloud for me. When did Brandt refuse to listen to the cry of his people?"

With these words the chieftain rose and stalked from the tent, leaving St. Leger and his cousin together.

"Do you know the penalty to which you have laid yourself liable, Samuel? You have been taken as a spy lurking within my lines. You know your fate."

"I am no spy," said Stanton, boldly, "and you know it."

I was outside your lines, and was trying to get to my company. I know nothing of the position of your army beyond enough to enable me to slip through."

"That makes no difference," replied St. Leger. "The offense is the same. Sorry am I that the son of your mother should be caught in such a trap. I heard the other day that you were taken by one of my officers; I have sent into the town twice to see you, and have been led to believe that you were there, but that you would not see me. Where have you been?"

"I was tied to a tree and tortured by the officer of whom you speak, and was not able to rise for ten days. At the end of that time I set out to join my company. You lay in my way; I tried to break through and was taken."

"You know the law of nations?"

"I was not disguised," said Stanton; "though found in your lines, I had no intention of spying; you surely will not try to fasten this guilt upon me, Barry?"

"I should not have a word to say upon the subject. A court martial will sit upon your case; I know what their verdict will be before it is given. There is only one way to escape."

"And that?" said Stanton, slowly.

"You must have felt before this time that this is a hopeless cause in which you have enlisted. You will only waste your youth in useless and disgraceful warfare, and perhaps end your days upon the gallows as a traitor. I tell you, the hemp is grown which will hang Washington, Hancock and Adams."

"You will never live to see the day," cried Stanton. "I will be prophet enough to predict a glorious future for this country when once free from the British yoke. The names of the men you have mentioned shall shine in our annals when you are dead and rotten, only remembered as the minion of a strong despotism, striving to crush the life out of a struggling young nation. But it will never be! God will not let such a glorious promise as ours come to naught. No, Barry St. Leger, rather give over your ambitious hopes and join with me in hating tyrants and despotism, and, hand in hand, we will do good work for a new country and a new flag. What do you say?"

"I say," cried St. Leger, pale with anger, "that you are carried so far by your enthusiasm that you will destroy yourself. Reflect before you go further. Bargoynes is sweeping down from the north like a flood, and will drive your puny armies before him into the Atlantic. Clinton and Howe are in the south. You have no navy; why should you struggle longer? This is the preposition I have to make: Leave this reckless service in which you are engaged and join with me. I promise you the same rank you hold there."

"I thought you knew me better than that, Barry St. Leger. I refuse."

"Do you dare?"

"Yes; and with scorn and contempt for the man who asks me to desert my flag."

"You *have* deserted it."

"I have *not*; I have shed my blood for England as a *Provincial*, but never in love. Do your worst with me; I am ready to bear it."

"Ho, there!" shouted St. Leger. "We will see. Enter, lieutenant."

Tom Goldey came in hastily.

"Is that guard outside?" asked St. Leger.

"It is, colonel."

"Order it in."

A sergeant came in with six privates.

"Take charge of this person," said St. Leger, addressing the lieutenant, "and see that he does not escape from your hands. If he does, you shall be the one to answer for it. Away with him!"

"You will repent this harshness, St. Leger," said Stanton.

"March!" said the orderly, and they took him away to the guard tent and ironed him heavily.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOOMED.

IT is not to be expected that a person of the revengeful disposition of the tory Golley would rest until he had pushed his hated enemy to the wall. He gave St. Leger no rest until the court-martial was called, and brought the influence of the Johnson family to bear upon the case. As the Johnsons had been involved in every quarrel between whig and tory in Tryon and Schoharie, for the past year, they had come in contact with young Stanton and knew him to be a violent whig. Under the circumstances, Sir John called upon St. Leger in his tent and talked with him on the subject. He told him that his cousin was so completely gone astray, that nothing could reclaim him. The whigs of the valley needed an example, and there was no better example to give than the hanging of this young person. St. Leger recoiled from the thought of dooming his own cousin to the scaffold, but he could do no better, so that the court-martial was ordered to sit next day. It consisted of Sir Guy as judge-advocate, and four other officers, three of whom were tories. Stanton was led in, strongly guarded, and cast his eyes over the court. A smile of derision curled his front lip at the sight. These were the men to try him—these, who hated the very name of whig with a deadly hatred. Sir Guy looked at him sternly and ordered him to stand forward.

"You stand here, sir, accused of being a spy. What do you say in your defense?"

"I say, as I have said before, I am no spy. And he who calls me that lies in his teeth. Is this a court?"

"It is, sir," replied the baronet.

"Then why should the farce continue? I know my doom before it is pronounced, and I stand here, Sir Guy Johnson, and defy you! I say you are a traitor to the country which hath reared you, to the soil on which you have lived all your life. Scotchian, the day will come when every true heart in Schoharie will hate the name of Johnson."

"We are not here to listen to such words," said Sir Guy, angrily. "What do you plead in regard to this crime?"

"I make no plea," replied the young soldier. "Why should I?"

"Clerk," said Sir Guy, turning to the young officer who performed that duty, "enter a plea of not guilty. Call the first witness for the prosecution."

"Thomas Goldey!" shouted the crier.

The tory appeared and gave an account of the capture of the prisoner, which was true except in one important particular: that he had first seen him lurking among the tents, and had taken him for one of the loyalists, but would now swear to his identity. A long array of witnesses were called, including Joe, who literally gnashed his teeth at the sight of the prisoner. When the evidence for the prosecution was over, Sir Guy asked Stanton what he had to say in his own defense. He stepped forward quickly.

"I had thought to die in silence, but now I must speak. These witnesses have *lied* before Heaven when they say that I was nearer any of the tents than the river-bank. But I shall not speak of that. How could I expect truth from such men, or justice from a court constituted and trammelled as this is? It is but an instrument of oppression—a ready tool in the hands of wicked men, led by a most imbecile and cruel king. Yes, I will say what few men know, the poor wretch who holds the great English scepter in his feeble grip, is now insane!"

"Treason! treason!" shouted the members of the court.

"Is it treason?" asked Stanton. "Well, if hatred of such a rule as *his* is treason, then I am a traitor black as night. I hate England; I hate her cruel laws. What right have you, only men, as I am, to set yourselves up in a court and take away my life?" (Commotion in the court as if the members would stop his speech). "I will *not* be silent. I claim the right to speak in my defense, and you have not the power to stay me. I appeal to St. Leger if you dare to silence me."

"Let him talk on," sneered Sir Guy. "Poor fellow, it is his last speech."

"I knew that I was foredoomed. A court! Alas, do you

desecrate the name of justice by applying such a name as that to this assembly? Who are the traitors here? Is it I, who always was and always will be true to the cause of America, or is it you, Sir Guy Johnson, and these your associates? Was ever such a dangerous comedy as this put upon the stage, where a Schenectady county whig is tried by a Tryon county tory? Men who hate each other as few men ever hated are placed here, one as judge of the other, to try him for his life. Judge, did I say? *Executioner* rather, for there is no quality which befits the judge in the heart of *any* tory, much less in *yours*, Sir Guy Johnson."

The baronet arose, gasping for breath, literally dumbfounded by the firm bearing of the prisoner. Tom Goldey, who stood near him, raised his hand and struck him in the face. Tom had a hard head or that blow would have been his last, for he received one in return which sent him reeling to the earth, with the blood gushing from his mouth and nose. He rose, foaming, knife in hand, and would have attacked the young soldier, but the guards crossed their weapons before him and forced him back.

"I will have your life for that blow," he shouted angrily
"I will have your life, I say!"

"Be quiet, Lieutenant," said Sir Guy. "This affair will end quite to your satisfaction. Be sure of that. Prisoner, have you any thing more to say?"

"Would any thing I could say here change your verdict? No. You will sentence me to death, and I shall meet it as unflinchingly as I have met my enemy in battle. I say no more."

"You have said enough. Guards, remove the prisoner, and we will confer on the evidence."

Stanton was led out, still strongly guarded. The conference was short, and he was soon called in again and placed before the court.

Sir Guy rose, with an ill-concealed expression of gratified malevolence in his dark face. A hush fell upon the court, as they noted the unfeigned beating of the man they had tried. He stood up, straight as a cedar, with the light of a strong purpose breaking over his face, and making it look noble.

"Prisoner," said Sir Guy, "I am sorry to be the one to say

these words to you. Stand forward and hear your sentence. This court-martial has found you guilty, and worthy of the death of a spy. But, because you are a soldier, they have decided that you shall die a soldier's death. At sunrise to-morrow you shall be taken to the meadows on the river-side, and there shot. And may the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

Stanton said not a word, but cast a withering look about the assembly, before which they visibly shrunk. Then he was led back to the guard-tent, and again placed in irons.

He was to die at sunrise! He was young, and young men cling to life. It is not to be supposed that he bowed meekly to his fate, and kissed the rod which smote him. He was to die like a soldier. That was something.

The Indian had escaped, and in passing through the Mohawk camp had killed a chief, whose death-cry had been heard by Brandt, in St. Leger's tent. He came into the fort, tired and bloody, bearing a reeking scalp in his belt, and told them that the "cappen" was taken. Besides losing a valuable officer by this, Gansevoort feared what that officer's fate might be. He knew that he had fallen into the hands of men who would not hesitate to take his life as a spy, since he had laid himself open to such a condemnation. He called a council of his officers, and it was decided to make a sortie that night and endeavor to free the prisoner. Wando was wild with delight, and volunteered to lead them in such a way that they could surprise the British camp. Gansevoort arranged his men silently within the fort, gave each officer his charge, and marched them out at the sally-port. Since the battle of Oriskany, being quite satisfied that the whigs could not gather an army for some time, and confident that the forces within the fort would not dare to make a sally, the British had relaxed their vigilance. The troops marched silently on until they reached the proper position, and the Indian was sent forward to reconnoiter. He found a point where he could get near the river and observe the motions of the enemy. He found the guard weak, except in the spot where the prisoner lay. From what he could see, they did not dream of an attack. Hurrying back to the American force, Wando made his report,

and Gansevoort prepared to charge. When all was ready, they rushed forward with a yell which sounded far and near over the field, and dashed into the camp, scattering British and Tories in dire confusion. So sudden was the attack that the British commandant first appeared in the severe *un-dress* uniform, first introduced by another bold Briton at Ticonderoga, at the beginning of the war. The bullets were whistling through the camp, and he beat a retreat long enough to throw on some necessary articles of clothing before he again appeared. He found the camp in dire confusion, and a disorderly storm of fugitives coming in from the outposts. By his exertions the regulars were at last made to get into something like order, and the sortie was checked; but not until a large quantity of baggage had been taken, which they could ill afford to lose. In the light of the confusion, Wando made his way to the tent where he was sure his friend lay, and entered. He found the irons which had been placed upon the arms and legs of the prisoner, but he was gone! Where, he could not tell. In great anxiety, the Indian ran from place to place, fearing that they had removed him upon the first attack.

But, he was mistaken. Another hand had set him free, and that was the hand of the hunchback! He had kept himself informed of the movements of the young soldier and knew that he was taken. While hanging about the camp, waiting for an opportunity to be of service, he heard the first noise of the sortie and joined the disordered rabble rushing back from the front. As they swept up to the tent where Stanton lay, the guard went in the flight; the hunchback rushed into the tent and set the prisoner free. Emerging from the place, they found that the British had again formed, in such a position that it was impossible to join the Americans. There was nothing to do but make their way to the rear, which they did with all speed. And when Wando forced his way to the tent they had buried themselves in the forest, and were hurrying toward the cavern, well knowing that the Johnsons would not rest until they had retaken their destined victim. They hurried on through the night, and when morning broke found themselves near the cave.

"You have saved my life again" said Stanton, taking the hand of the hunchback.

"Don't waste time in making speeches," replied the other, quickly. "Let us get to the cave as soon as possible. But stop! It will be useless to try to hide it longer. Let us sit on this stone and I will tell you a tale."

They sat down together.

"It was ten years ago," said the hunchback, "when I found myself alone one night in the streets of London, after your uncle's death. 'Twas a bleak January day, and I was going through a back street, hissed and jeered at as I passed along, when I heard a pitiful voice asking for charity. I looked down, yes, *down*, for it was a small creature who cried to me for help, not more than eight years old. A beautiful little girl, though her garments were thin, and her cold feet peeped through the holes in her worn shoes. I took her to my inn, clothed and fed her, kept her from contact with men, and so taught her to love me. Before a week had passed we were on the ocean. My little darling staid with me, and as I was driven from place to place, she was with me still. I loved that child. She was my sole purpose in life—my only joy. As I left the last city of refuge and came out into the wilderness, I did not come alone; she was with me."

"I thought so," said Stanton. "Then I was not mistaken. The beautiful creature I have seen was not a myth."

"No, she is sound flesh and blood. Let me tell you, sir: when we first met I tried to hate you as I still hate your father. But I could not do it. You have too much in your face like the woman whom the poor hunchback dared to love. I could have borne my love in silence, died, and never made a sign; but he betrayed me into folly, and by that act he lies in his grave; and—and—I am followed by his ghost! Ah! off, I say, off! They dug your grave deep enough, and piled the earth heavy on your breast, to keep you down!"

He had started to his feet, and threw his arms wildly in the air, as if waving off some fearful specter. His countenance was distorted, and drops of sweat stood on his forehead.

"What is the matter?" said Stanton, in great concern.

"Why, it is gone! Do not question me, young man. It is enough that I must bear the fearful penalty of my deed."

"But what did you see?"

"The man I killed by that far-off English river, lying as he

lay that day, with the blood upon his breast. I see him often now, and I know that he comes to warn me that my hour is drawing near—the hour when I must quit this earth which I have encumbered so long with this distorted trunk. Shade of the fallen!" he cried, sinking on one knee, and elevating his right hand, "I hear thy summons and I will obey. When my time comes, I will be ready."

"This is delusion," said Stanton. "You allow your imagination to run riot, and you see the result."

"Do I?" said the hunchback, with a sad smile. "Perhaps you are right. It is enough for me that I see this vision of blood and steel more often now than ever. And I know he summons me to the doom which I shall be only too happy to meet. Let it come quickly."

"Look," cried Stanton, suddenly. "Do you not see a man standing on yonder rock?"

"I see him," replied the dwarf, taking his little telescope from his pocket and applying it to his eye. "It is as I expected. Your man is the Indian, Joe, who doubtless has followed us all the way from Schuyler. Let us go to the cabin. He shall search for us there, but we shall be found wanting."

They hurried down to the cabin. Half an hour after, Indian Joe came in sight, crawling stealthily up to the window with his gun ready for a shot. But, when he looked in, expecting to see the two men within reach of his bullet, he was surprised to find that the birds had flown. Whither, he could not tell.

In the mean time the two men had made their way to the cellar and opened the way to the cavern by moving a large stone in the wall and replacing it. This done, they were in a narrow passage, through which they could walk upright, until, in the darkness, the hunchback paused and gave a sharp whistle. It was answered, soon after, by a musical voice, which sounded strange echoes in the deep darkness. Steps were now heard, and a torch appeared, and then they saw the girl who had twirled from the presence of the young man standing only a few feet away, and bending forward to peer into the darkness.

"Why do you let go to her?" whispered Stanton.

"A single step would give you a grave deep in the bowels of the earth," answered the hunchback. "Two feet from the place where we stand, a chasm runs downward to an unknown depth, the bottom veiled in darkness. Stand where you are."

"Is that you, father?" said the musical voice of the girl.

"Yes, daughter," he answered. "Let down the bridge."

There was a creaking of ropes and blocks, and Stanton saw by the torchlight that a narrow bridge was descending slowly, until it settled on the rock at their feet. It had a strong rail on each side to preclude the danger of a fall, and was firmly and compactly built. The hunchback crossed first, and when Stanton also passed over, he found him holding the hand of the young girl, who had a smile of welcome on her face.

Not desiring to intrude, Stanton employed his time in examining the fastenings of the drawbridge, which showed the mechanical skill of the strange man who had made it. He was still engaged in this work when the hunchback spoke.

"This is my child," he said. "I hope you will be friends, Sadia."

A mingled smile and blush made the face of the young girl look more beautiful than ever, as she extended her hand to her new friend.

"You will have no need to fly from him again," said the dwarf, smiling. "I found it impossible to make the captain believe you a spirit. Let us go on. But, first help me raise the drawbridge."

A very little effort placed the bridge in the niche prepared to receive it, in the rocky wall. When this was done, they walked on, Sadia a little in advance, waving the torch over her head, to show the beauty of the cavern, which was gradually widening, until at last they entered a spacious room, unlike any they had yet seen. A pair of rude steps had been hewn out of the solid rock, up which Sadia clambered, followed by the others, until she reached a small opening in the wall, that appeared to be covered on the other side by a bearskin. Pushing this aside, they passed through, and Stanton found himself in the little curtained recess, into which he had

pursued Sadia the second time he saw her. He now remembered having seen this skin hanging against the wall, but had not thought to move it, so that she had been standing on the steps ready for farther flight, if he had discovered the opening. She was found at last, and stood in the lofty cavern, still waving the flaming torch. This was their welcome home.

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

THEY passed the next three days pleasantly enough. It was seldom, in that period, that three persons of education were thrown together for any length of time. Education was rare indeed. The three spent much of the time in conversation, and in wandering through the long passages, and finding new beauty in their strange abiding-place. On the morning of the fourth day, the hunchback went out alone, and left them together. The two had grown shy of one another lately. Why? It was nothing strange. Sadia was just awaking to the fact that she was born to love and to be loved. Tired of rambling, they had come back to the upper cave and seated themselves.

"How long before Caspar will return?" asked the young man.

"He never stays long away from me," she answered. "Since we first came to this place, he never left me for more than a day until he went away with you this last time. Oh, sir, I know that he is deformed; I know that he is not like other men, but I also know that he has a good, kind heart. The sharp way he looks is no index of his character."

"I don't think you would grow weary of this place."

"He tells me that he would not remain here much longer, and that I should go to some town to live, I do not know where. I could be happy any where. Here, I am not always kept so closely confined as I am now. This war has made a change in our way of living. I used to stay at the cabin

most of the time, and only come here in the coldest winter weather. I have been here so long, that I begin to love the old place."

"But do you not wish to leave it?"

"I do not know that I should be happier in another place. But it will be as he says."

"But suppose he were to die," said Stanton, coming nearer. "You know it is possible; all men are liable to die. What would you do then?"

"I can not tell. The God who does not let a sparrow fall to the ground without his notice, will not let one of his children perish. He would raise up a friend for me."

He had seized her hand now, and confined it in his eager grasp, while his eyes looked confusion into hers. Her eyes dropped in great trouble, while he told her that he had loved her from the first moment he had seen her. They were blunt wooers in our grandfathers' days. They settled it between them somehow, and he succeeded in convincing her that she had another friend beside her father. If he had met her in any other situation, the captain might have been more formal in his style of proposing. But, in this case, necessity broke down the laws of etiquette.

Soon after, she heard the whistle of the hunchback. He came in to tell them what he had been doing and proposed to do. He had scouted toward the Mohawk, and found that Indian Joe had returned to the river in great haste. "Depend upon it," said the dwarf, "he has discovered something, and has gone back for more men. Before many days, perhaps before many hours, this cave may be a citadel. If they have found the passage through which I first took you, then we must put it out of their power to use it, and will make the other passage too hot for them. Come with me, captain. Sadia, remain where you are."

They entered the passage through which they before had passed out. Caspar carried a lighted torch in his hand. Stepping at last near the place where it was necessary to cross, he showed Stanton a heavy train of powder, carefully laid upon strong brown paper.

"In yonder passage," he said, "are two kegs of gun powder. This train communicates with them. If at any

time you hear the bell in the passage ring, run in and fire the train. If any of the villains are in the passage, may the Lord have mercy on their souls. There is one thing more I have to speak of. Have you talked with Sadia?"

"Sir?"

"Have you asked her to be your wife?"

"I have, sir. I hope you are not displeased."

"Do you mean to keep your plighted faith honorably?"

"If I do not, the Lord take away my wicked life that day, for I shall not be worthy to live. That is my answer."

"God deal with you as you deal with her," cried the dwarf. "I am glad that you have spoken; I had hoped that you might, and I think you will keep your word. You will find her a good and pure maiden, untainted by the wickedness which is in the world. She will make a loving wife, for one who has been so true to a disfigured wretch like me, can not fail to be true to her husband. One thing more. Come here."

They passed through the cave where Sadia sat, and into the one where Stanton had lain when wounded. From the wall of the cave, near the spot where the engine lay concealed, the dwarf removed a stone and showed a deep cavity in which lay a glittering heap as he held down the torch.

"Do you see it?" said he. "It is gold, the dross for which the man whose name is wormwood in my mouth, would have sold his sister to the hunchback. That wealth is all my Sadia's—her dower when she marries. Remember where it lies, for she knows nothing of it. You will find lying on it my will, which gives this money to her. You see I trust you."

He replaced the stone, and they went back to the outer cavern. "I shall not come in for some hours," said the dwarf, "and when you hear my whistle, come to the opening in the pillar. I shall have something to tell you. Sadia, the captain has told me what he has said to you, and I am satisfied. Be as kind to him as you have been to me, and he will be a happy man."

With these words, he disappeared, before they had time to thank him. Two hours passed, and they were talking of the future, when the whistle sounded through and through the cavern.

He answered it by a clear, bird-like call, and the two went through a narrow opening, and, hand in hand, ran down the passage, Sadia persisting in carrying the torch. The drawbridge was down, and they were soon at the opening of the cellar. No one was there. Sadia passed through the aperture in the wall, and ran up the steps which led to the room above, so quickly that Stanton was left behind. A sharp scream from her lips hastened his steps, and he leaped into the room where he had fought that duel with the dwarf, sword in hand, just in time to see her struggling in the grasp of a stalwart tory, while Tom Goldey stood by, laughing. Upon the floor, bound hand and foot, lay the hunchback. A quick glance through the open door showed Stanton a number of men dashing through the trees in the direction of the other passage. He knew that what he did must be quickly done. A single stroke cut down the man who held Sadia, and another set the dwarf at liberty, who sprang to his feet, regained his sword, and was striking at Tom Goldey with intense hatred in his eyes, when that worthy took to his heels and fled. Leaving the tory dying on the floor, Stanton raised Sadia in his arms, and ran down to the secret passage, with the dwarf following closely. He replaced the stone, and they were across the bridge and had lowered it before the valorous Goldey had sufficiently recovered from his fright to return. When he did so, he found his friend dead, and the three he sought gone. He had pounced upon the hunchback just as he uttered the signal, and gagged him to prevent his giving any further alarm, and had waited to see what the signal would bring forth. It resulted as we have seen.

As they were climbing the steps to enter the main cavern, the hunchback suddenly thrust his companion roughly aside, and sprung through the opening. As he did so, Stanton heard the sound of a bell, and knew that an attempt was being made to penetrate the cave. Hurrying into it, he laid Sadia on her couch, and turned toward the passage. At this moment, a sound like thunder shook the cave to its very center, and Casper staggered out of the narrow entrance, saying,

“It is done!”

One of the tories who was taken, afterwards told the story. Ten of their number were in the passage, and another was

about to enter, when the little mound in which the entrance was placed seemed to rise into the air, and when it sunk again the passage was obliterated and ten men were buried in a living grave. No wonder that the face of the hunchback was livid, or that his lips quivered. He had seen men die, but never as these men had done. However, they were little to be pitied. Most of them were Tryon and Seloharie county tories, who had the butchery of their brethren at Oriskany on their souls. But, for all that, Stanton regretted their miserable fate.

Caspar had been wounded by a piece of falling stalactite, and the blood was flowing from a gash in his forehead. Wiping it off with one hand, he threw it in the air, crying out, "Let not their blood speak against me, O, Lord, for they have shed the blood of thy saints."

"You are hurt," said Stanton. "Let me bind it up."

"Touch me not," replied the strange man, waving him away. "I have blood enough to do the work for which I am sent, and it is written that this wound shall never heal. Where is Sadia?"

"She lies on her couch."

"I fear she was hurt in the cabin."

"No. But she is not used to strife, and she saw me kill you tory. I know him, and never struck with a better man. The man had a brother in our army at Ticonderoga. In the battle after the retreat, he was shot down and left upon the field. This tory, this Matthew Raynor, wandering over the field found his brother badly wounded. The tory saw in him only a whig, with life in his body, and sprung at him to finish him. The wounded whig raised himself and called upon his brother's name. Then it was that the monster struck him and ran his brother through the heart, stifling every effort of energy trembling on the helpless man's lips. What think you of that?"

"It is well that he is dead. But what think you of those who lie at the ruins of the passage yonder?"

"Let them lie. They are the chosen men of Goldey, soldiers of Johnson's Greens. They deserve their fate."

"It is not my fault that I have their blood on my hands," said Caspar. "I did it to save her, for whose sake I would

sacrifice every tory from New Hampshire to Georgia. What do you think they will do?"

"It will not be long before they discover the passage. They know we did not leave the house. Let us go and see. Bring your rifle."

Sadia had recovered, and begged to go with them. The others would not consent. They said nothing to her of the dead who lay under the ruins of the limestone passage. She consented to remain, but followed them as soon as they had turned the first angle in the path. When she saw them again, they were half hidden behind projecting rocks, and were piling up blocks of limestone in front of the chasm, for what purpose she did not know. It was a breastwork they were constructing, and none too soon, for just as they laid the last stone a torch showed itself around the corner of the passage, and the first tory appeared, creeping cautiously forward, looking straight ahead. Unconscious of the chasm yawning at his feet the doomed wretch came on, thrusting forward the unlucky torch which was to be his attendant down to that fearful death. Step by step, he neared the chasm, and the two lying behind the breastwork dared not warn him. What was his life to the life and honor of the poor girl in the passage behind them? The tory took the fatal step. There was a wild and startling shriek, a grasping at empty space, and he went down headlong into the fearful depth, a second cry pealing up as he disappeared for ever from human view.

CHAPTER X.

THE UNDERGROUND BATTLE.

Tom Goldey and the rest of the tories heard that dying yell, and hurried forward. But, the man was gone, not to rise until the trumpet of the archangel sounds, and the dead come out of their graves. Goldey paused upon the awful brink and held the torch low, but no eye could pierce the thick gloom of that horrible abyss. How to cross the chasm? This was

the question. While they were in doubt, the voice of the hunchback hailed them from the breastwork, demanding their business.

"We want you, you old crookback," shouted the tory.
"What sort of a trap is this you have set for us?"

"The trap is not of my setting," said the other, in a voice of solemn meaning. "The great God who is above all, made that pit, and the man who has fallen into it has only met his appointed doom. Hear me. Go away and leave us, for, if you stay, the day will be fatal to us both. I feel inspired to say this."

"We will never leave this place until you are taken or killed. Fool that you are, what can two men do against the fifty who are at my back?"

"How many lie under the limestone passage?" demanded the hunchback. "You are the fool. Do you not see that but three men can walk abreast against us, and that those in the rear can let fire a shot? Give up this project."

"Fire at him!" shouted the tory.

Four or five rifle's cracked, and the balls pattered against the stones of the hastily-erected breastwork. A laugh was the only answer made by the besieged. They did not intend to waste powder nor fire until forced to do so. The laugh irritated the tories more than words could have done, and a yell of anger broke from them, which only elicited another laugh from the others.

"I tell you, Captain Stanton," cried Tom Goldey, "that if you do not yield now, it would be better for you if you had never been born. The tortures you endured upon the lake-shore that day will be boy's play compared with the agonies you will have to suffer. For your own sake and the sakes of those who are with you, give yourself up at once."

"What imminent doom do you hold out?" asked Stanton. "If I am taken I must meet my fate as a spy. I do not think you can dare to kill me."

"There are many kinds of deaths," replied Goldey in a whispering whisper. "That which I will give you will be too terrible for tongue to utter. And, as for the girl who is with you, I can only say I pity her. And it must be something terrible to bring *me* into the heart of Thomas Goldey."

"And if we yield?" said Stanton repressing his anger with difficulty. "What are your terms?"

"A safe conduct to the camp of St. Leger, when he shall dispose of you as he thinks proper. This is all I can promise you."

"Shall we do this?" whispered Stanton turning to the hunchback. "It will save her, at least."

"Refuse their terms," cried the musical voice of Sadia, as she came forward from her hiding place. "Yonder ruffian can lie as well as *murder*, and he would not keep his word. If we fall into his hands, our fate in any case will be the same. As for me, I will plunge headlong into this yawning gulf, sooner than let him lay the weight of a finger on my body. Defy him! It is the only way."

"Brave girl!" said Stanton. "She has taught me my duty. You have our answer, Tom Goldey. We defy you. And if you attempt to force a passage, we will make this dismal place a living monument to the strength of two men. Go back, my darling. You can do nothing here."

"I will go back to the place where I have been hidden. No harm can come to me there."

"Be careful. Do not look out, or you may be struck by a stray ball. Do this for my sake. Hasten back, for we have work to do. Farewell, and God have you in his keeping."

She ran back to her hiding-place just as Goldey addressed Stanton again:

"Once for all, will you surrender?"

"Once for all, I will not."

Another volley was fired by the tories, which was as fruitless as the others. Some of the band went back to the house and brought down a quantity of wood, with which they kindled a fire on the very brink of the gulf. In the mean time, others brought down planks of split hemlock, to bridge the chasm. As these appeared, Stanton saw that they must begin their work. At a given signal the rales were lifted and two tories dropped dead in their tracks, while the rest retreated hastily behind the first angle of the passage. The voice of Goldey was now heard, calling upon his men to rally for an attack. He at last induced them to go on with the construction of the bridge. But, the moment they appeared, the rales cracked

again, and two others dropped on the stone floor. Balked in their design, they retreated again, and lashed two planks together under cover of the angle. Then placing a row of men upon each side, they lifted it, and ran down the path. Two of the leaders fell at the first fire, but, before the defenders could reload, the hastily improvised bridge had been laid across the chasm, and the workmen had retreated. The moment had come for desperate action. Stanton turned his sword-belt so as to bring his weapon near his hand, and took his pistols from his belt. They had failed him once; he did not intend that they should do so again.

The fire which had been built was going down, and the hunchback lighted a torch and thrust it into a crevice above their heads, so that it shone upon the bridge. He had drawn his sword and laid it beside him on the rock, and grasped his ready rifle, which he had just reloaded. He was waiting for *Goldey*, but that worthy prudently kept out of sight, having no desire to court the sharp shooting of the hunchback. He had caught one glimpse of him, kneeling in the uncertain light, and began to fear that what he had said was true, and that he was to die that day.

And what a place to die in! What dreadful gloom! *Goldey* was courageous, but he found it impossible to repress the shudder which came over him. He shook the impression off with an effort, and arranged his men for the charge. They went in with a cry which rung through the cavern with startling distinctness. The foremost man was shot through the heart upon the brink of the chasm, by Caspar, and went down into the black depths. Two others fell wounded by the pistol-shots of the captain; and in this fearful place, to fall was to die, for the slippery planks would not bear them, and they followed their companions. Then came the struggle! The men who now took the lead were good swordsmen, and engaged the hunchback. It could not last. No man upon the continent could cope with the hunchback in such a battle. His antagonist fell, pierced through and through by the bright, keen steel. At the same moment the opponent of Stanton slipped and fell. The rest, appalled by such dreadful slaughter, turned to fly, while those behind, unconscious of the fact, kept crowding forward, urging their unfortunate comrades on to their death.

The two resolute defenders struck hard and fast, until they fairly sickened of their dreadful work. At last Goldey, seeing the uselessness of the attempt, recalled his men from the assault.

By his order, more planks were brought down from the cabin, with which, though with heavy loss, they succeeded in completely covering the chasm, so that four or five could advance it once, and fight to advantage. This done, he headed the rush in person, and crossed swords with the hunchback. He seemed to have shaken off the incubus which had fallen on him, and was ready for battle. The last rush threw down a portion of the barricade, and they fought upon more equal terms. The backers of Tom Goldey saw, after the first two passes, that he was no match for the hunchback, and two of them came to his aid, while two more attacked Stanton. Perceiving that matters were coming to a crisis, the former called out to Sadia in a foreign tongue which it was one of her accomplishments to read and understand, ordering her to fly to the inner cavern, and that they would follow. Hearing the unknown tongue the tories shrunk back a little, when Caspar made a determined rush, which for a moment cleared the bridge. This was the moment for which he waited, and dashing the torch into the chasm, he called to Stanton to follow him, and fled. Before the astounded tories had sufficiently recovered their senses to follow, the fugitives had passed through the opening, and reached a haven of safety for a time.

Leaving Stanton to guard the opening, the hunchback hurried down into the lower cavern, and returned, carrying in his strong arms his model engine, which he placed just on the other side of the narrow opening, and, working quickly, managed to get it in motion before the tories came out of the passage. When they did so, all started back aghast, for there, before their eyes, was a fearful thing, vomiting fire and smoke, and reaching out its long arms toward them. Not knowing what diabolical contrivance the ingenuity of the dwarf had raised against them, with one accord they cried out in horror, and crowded one another in attempts to get further away from the little monster.

"What have you done?" said Stanton, addressing the hunchback.

"I have done that which will insure us a rest," replied the latter, with a slight chuckle. "It will be some time before they will dare approach it, and if they do I will give them a sight which each will remember to his dying day."

"They will destroy it."

"They will not," answered the other. "I alone must be its destroyer, I who brought it into being. In other days men will come, who will do what I have done, and get the credit of a great discovery. What do I care? But this I swear—no tory shall lay a finger on my pet."

"Are they not coming nearer?"

The hunchback pushed aside the bearskin, and looked out. No one saw him, for all were gazing intently on the engine, and one man, bolder than his fellows, was approaching to examine it. For the first time, Stanton saw that the dwarf held in his hand a string connected with some part of the machinery.

"They little know the power of steam," he muttered. Another man followed another, seeing that the first had come near the machine with impunity, followed him, and soon the entire gang were standing over the engine, watching its motions.

"This is some invention of the crookback to frighten us," cried Tom Goldey. "I will see if I can not stop its motions." He took up a large stone as he spoke, and approached the engine. All this time the dwarf had been pulling hard upon the string, and just as Goldey poised the stone, and was about to dash it upon the machinery, it burst with a tremendous explosion. This was all that was needed. When the smoke cleared away, not a tory was in sight, and not one of them stopped until he breathed the pure air of heaven outside the cabin. Tom followed, cursing, begging them to stop, to follow the fugitives. But his entreaties were in vain. They would not return. They had enough of underground fighting.

"I knew he was no human being," cried one tory, addressing another, "for, when we first took him in the cabin, fire flew out of his eyes. Then, did you hear him talk to the girl? What Christian ever heard such language? No, Tom Goldey, I won't go back into that cave."

"Are you cowards to give up all, when it is in your grasp? We had driven them out of their stronghold, and this was their last device. I saw the opening in the wall through which they had gone. We had only to follow and take them."

"I've got enough, thank you. An idea occurs to me. We have plenty of time. Let's starve them out!"

"Eh?"

"Did it never occur to you that they must be short of provisions? When we took the old devil, he was just bringing in a deer. Well, there lies the deer. I think it very likely that they are short for grub."

"Never thought of that before, upon my word," cried Tom, slapping his leg enthusiastically. "You are a jewel, after all, Dean. Besides, come to look at it, I believe *all* their provisions are up here. I don't think they expected us *quite* so soon. Where have you been, Sapper?"

This was addressed to a tory, who was coming down from the shore of the lake, with a very pale face.

"I've been up to the place where our poor fellows went in first, and it seems to me that some of them must be alive there. Don't you think we could move the stones and get some of them out?"

"I don't think it would pay," replied Tom, coolly. "They must be dead, all of them; as for me, I am going down into the cave to see what I can do in the way of negotiating. Sapper, pick out ten men, and come with me. We may as well remove our dead while we are about it."

They provided themselves with torches, and passed down. At the bridge they paused and contemplated the fearful havoc which had been done. Six men lay there, pierced with many wounds, and four of them had fallen by the hands of the hunchback. Passing the bloody evidence of the day's work, they advanced to the place where the relics of the engine lay scattered on every side. Here the voice of the dwarf called on them to pause.

"We do not come to fight," said Goldey. "We only wish to remove our dead. We have done with fighting. There are better ways to accomplish what we seek. We can wait outside until you are ready to come to us."

"What do you mean?" demanded Stanton, angrily. "We will not yield."

"We have elected a champion to fight our battles for us," said Goldey, with a sneering laugh. "Would you like to know his name?"

"It is not *Tom Goldey*," sneered Stanton. "He can't do it. He has given it up as a bad job. Set it down in the annals of Scholastic, that more than fifty of Johnson's Greens were beaten by two men and a girl. I should be pleased to see Sir John's face when you make your report."

"The name of our champion is Hunger!" said Goldey, "and he has a handmaid called Thirst. Ah, ha! When you gnaw your tongues for pain and repent, and are ready to yield yourselves up, call me and I will come."

"We are not without provisions," said Stanton. "Give him the lie, Caspar."

But, Caspar had allowed his head to droop upon his hands. In the excitement of battle, he had forgotten that he had gone out to bring in food and had failed to do it. Tom Goldey went away with another Leigh, and I commenced the removal of the dead. Long before night had set in, this was completed, and seven fresh graves were made by the shores of that silent lake. For the man who had fallen in the cabin was buried with the rest.

CHAPTER XI.

WANDO.

THE Indian friend of Tom Goldey came to him the next day after the battle in the cavern and spoke to him as he sat under a tree, thinking over the events of the last two days.

"My brother is dead," said he. "He has lost many warriors. An Indian never forgets, and Stanton would not at the Mo-Lawk. The warriors saw my fall; I will never rest until I have slain him. Wando is my enemy; when we meet, blood will be shed. Where is the Oneida? He dare not show his face."

"He is not in the cave," said Tom. "I too have ~~an~~ ~~so~~ account to settle with the Indian, and I will do it. Neither of these men shall brag that they have beaten Tom Goldey."

"Let my brother hasten. Wando is not in the cave, but he will not rest while Stanton is in danger; he will be on our trail. Our men will not stay long at Schuyler, and we must lose no time. Let me go in search of him."

"Will you go alone?" asked Goldey.

"Does a chief need help to fight against *one* man?" was the haughty reply. "No; Wando shall not find me weak in the day of battle."

"You must remember one thing," said Goldey. "Though he is an Oneida, there are few, even among your tribe, who dare meet him in battle; neither do I think you ought to risk your life against him alone."

"My white brother is not just to his friend," said the other. "Did he ever hear that I turned back in the day of battle? Then why should I fear to meet Wando alone? No one shall go with me."

"Have your own way," said Tom. "I should be sorry to hear that any harm had happened to you."

"I am not a child," said the other, quickly. "Do you doubt me? Let me go."

"When will you return?"

The Indian took him by the arm and led him to the edge of the opening, from which they could see the rising sun.

"I go out upon the trail," said he, "and if I come not back when yonder sun is in that place in the sky two times, know that I will come back no more. Will my brother go again into the cave to fight with the 'little dark man'?"

"Not I! We have him safe; he can not get out, and must sooner or later yield to hunger."

They parted, and the Indian went out into the forest. His instinct taught him that the subtle Oneida would follow their trail to this spot and do what he could to aid his friend. Upon first leaving the camp, he kept close to the shore of the lake for a mile or two, pressing on at the long lope which seems natural to the Indian. When he had gone far enough to suit his purpose he suddenly broke away from the shore and crossed the country at a rapid pace until he saw upon the fresh-fallen

leaves, the print of a moccasined foot. The eyes of the savage dilated, and he bent to examine the mark. To most men there was nothing to be real in that simple footprint, but it was like a painted page to him. He read in it that an Indian, and one of the Oneida nation, had passed by. He could tell, too, that the mark was not half an hour old. To him this was proof that no other than the Oneida had passed. Rising, he pursued the trail for a short distance, when, close to the bank of a creek, it abruptly ceased; but he was not balked. Kneeling on the bank of the stream, he saw the footprints in the clear water, and knew that Wando had stepped into it to cover his trail. Walking swiftly along the bank, no longer watching the water, he looked carefully for the place where the Indian had emerged from the stream. After going half a mile he became satisfied that the place which he sought had been passed over, and crossing the stream, turned back in search of the lost trail. When he reached the place where it was first struck, it had not yet been found, so wary had Wando been in concealing it. The Indian began to be angry, but turned back again and patiently went over the same ground. At length he came to a place where a pendant grape-vine, hanging low, struck him in the face. But for this he would not have noticed it, but he now saw that the vine had been cut. Grasping it in both hands, he walked back to its full length and swung himself across the stream. Following the line upon which the vine swung, he found the place where the heels of Wando had struck the yielding soil. Gratified by this success, he followed the recovered trail more slowly, knowing that the one he sought could not be far away. The two hated each other bitterly. There was no prouder warrior in the whole confederacy than the friend of Tom Golley, not even excepting Brandt himself, and he could not bear to divide his glory with a warrior of the Oneidas. When he had followed the trail in this direction for more than a mile, it turned off abruptly toward the camp of Golley, which was of course the destination of the Oneida; for it was indeed Wando whose trail the Indian had found. The brave fellow had determined to find his friend, and had picked out his trail among the many about the tent in which he had been confined. At last he found the footprints of the hunchback, and knew who had rescued Stanton.

He kept on steadily, taking means to cover his trail, more from habit than from any fear of being followed, for he knew no one capable of following his trail except the man who *was* following it, whom he supposed to be with Tom Goldey. At length he reached the place from which he could see the tory camp. Knowing nothing of the cavern, he could but think that the hunchback and his companions had been taken prisoners or had escaped. As it was broad daylight, and as the tories might be strolling in the woods, he looked about him for a hiding-place. No better offered itself than a tree, and he climbed one near at hand. From his elevated perch he could look into the camp of the enemy and see all their motions. Among others he saw Tom Gobley standing in the doorway of the cabin, and was tempted to send a ball through his head and take his chance of escape afterward. Looking back over the ground over which he had just passed, he saw something which surprised him, and put him on his guard. The tree in which he had taken his station commanded a view of a little opening in the woods, through which an Indian was passing, bending forward with his eyes on the trail. Wando knew his relentless pursuer, and that he could not stay where he was without being discovered. Leaving the tree, he darted through the bushes toward the lake, and there, making a circuit, he laid down in the bushes near his old trail. Before five minutes had passed, his pursuer passed by, like a hound upon a hot scent. He paused at the foot of the tree which Wando had climbed, and examined the bark. His knowledge of woodcraft satisfied him that the tree had been climbed, but was not perfect enough to tell him that his enemy had not remained in the tree. Stepping back a few paces he examined it, but could detect no sign of life among the branches. Not daring to climb the tree, he began the ascent of another, side by side, with the first, from which he could see a dark body, half-concealed by the leaves. This was the blanket of Wando, ingeniously arranged so as to take the proportions of a human form. Even the subtle savage was deceived, and was fully satisfied that Wando and no other was concealed in the tree. How to get him out was the question. He did not wish to get aid from the camp if he could help it; he had told Tom Goldey that he could bring in the scalp of Wando alone, and

he was determined to do it if possible. While endeavoring to get the attention of the Oneilla, one of Tom Goldey's men passed by and seeing something in the tree, fired at it. The ball just grazed the shoulder of the vengeful savage, and very nearly put an end to his tramping for ever. He slid hastily from the tree, and in his rage would have killed the tory, with his hatchet, if the fellow had not thrown up his gun to ward off the blow.

"Was it you, chief? Dod rot it, I thought it was a b'ar! You'll excuse me."

"Fool!" was the angry response. "Me kill you."

The report of the rifle had brought many of the tories to the spot, and Goldey interposed between the angry chief and the unfortunate man who had fired at him.

"What is the matter here?" he demanded. "What ~~was~~ he done? Let the chief speak, and he shall be punished."

"I seen Lim in the tree," bawled the poor fellow, "and I thought it was a b'ar."

"He shot me," shouted the chief, shaking his tomahawk at the speaker. "'Spose he keep away, good; I no care. 'Spose he speak to me, me kill and scalp."

"Get out of the way, Tompkins," said Goldey. "What were you doing in the tree, chief? I thought you were going after Wando."

"Have been," said the chief. "Him here."

"Where?" said Goldey, starting. "I don't see him."

"Him in tree," said the Indian, pointing to the beech in which the Oneilla had been hidden. Half a dozen rifles were fired, but an imperious gesture from the hand of Goldey caused them to be lowered immediately.

"I don't want Lim killed yet," said he. "I have a curiosity to see how the red rascal will behave under trying circumstances. Can you see him, men?"

"Him dare," said the Indian. "See him, self."

"Yes," said one of the gang. "I see him, too. But the coward don't stir. How shall we get Lim out of that if he don't choose to come?"

"He must see that it is useless to make us trouble," said Tom. "Speak to him, chief, and tell him to come down."

The savage addressed a few words to him in the Indian

tongue, to which no response was made, of course. The eyes of the Indian began to blaze, and taking his knife in his teeth, he suddenly clasped his arms about the tree and began to climb. All stood silent, expecting a death-struggle in the tree. The savage advanced cautiously, until he reached a point from which he could make out the deception. Grasping the bearskin, he dashed it to the ground, uttering a cry of rage. Simultaneous with his cry came a whoop and shot from the Oneida. A tory, standing near Tom Goldey, fell, shot through the heart. Then a shout went up for vengeance, and they scattered in pursuit. But all gave out in the first mile, leaving the Mohawk bounding forward, tireless still, upon the trail of the man he hated. Wando knew that they must fight, and when they had run far enough to make sure that the tories had given over the pursuit, he halted upon the bank of the creek, and waited for the other to come up with him. He hesitated as he saw that Wando had halted, and half drew his hatchet. But a signal from the Oneida restored it to his belt, and he advanced without fear.

"We are warriors," said Wando. "Let us be enemies like men, and not like boys. Let us rest and eat. When that is done we will fight. It is a good place."

The Mohawk looked about with a smile of grim approval.

"Shall there be peace between us?" said Wando.

"The Oneida is very wise," said the other. "Who are like them in cunning? There shall be peace. We will rest and eat, and then we will take weapons and fight for the ground."

They sat down together. Wando took the pouch from his girdle containing parched corn, and held it out to his enemy. The Mohawk took some, and began to eat gravely, now and then stooping to take a little water in his hand and drink it. Wando followed his example, and when he had finished, took off his upper belts, tightened his girdle, and waited for the Mohawk. He sat upon the bank of the stream, with his elbows on his knees.

"Oneida," said he, "I have had a vision, and you shall hear it before we fight. There has been a battle under the earth, and many of the green-coats lie there. We fought in the shade. There was a pit underfoot, and when a man fell

he rose no more, and it was so deep that we could not hear him strike the ground. The little black man was there, and Stanton. They fought hard, and we were beaten. Then I saw one of the angels of the white men. It had long hair and was clothed in white. I knew that it was a spirit, and called to the white men to come back, but they would not. Many of them fell, and then we pushed the dark man away from the pit, and he ran away. I saw the spirit no more. We went on, and I saw something, breathing fire and smoke, and reaching after me with its long arms. Is a Mohawk a child?"

"He is a great brave," said Wando.

"Yet he fled. He feared the thing with long arms. It was a devil, and when the white men touched it, then it shouted aloud, and I threw stone and iron at them, and they swear that they will go back no more."

"It is well. Is my brother well rested?"

"Yea."

"Then let him take arms in his hands, and fight. The best man will have the scalp of a great brave."

The Mohawk rose and prepared for battle. Each of them had a hatchet and a knife, which they had proved in many a fight. In his ordinary state of health he was a match for the Oneida, or any other Indian in New York, not excepting the great war-chief himself. But the events of the past few days had taken from his force, and the wound which had been reopened by Stanton had not healed again fully. But he was eager for the battle, which could have but one ending. In the first onset the Mohawk went down, pierced through the breast by the keen knife of Wando. A gasp, a grasping at empty space, and he was dead. Wando drew the knife round the scalp of the dead man, and tore off the reeking trophy. This secured, he hastily scooped out a grave in the moist earth, piled some leaves over the body, and a heap of stones over this, and laid upon the heap the moccasin of the slain man, that those passing by might know that a Mohawk lay beneath, and would not disturb the remains. The last rite finished, Wando turned back upon the trail, having removed his worst enemy from the path. The revelation of the fallen warrior had proved to him that Stanton was neither

dead, nor in the hands of the enemy. He knew nothing about the cave. The legends of the tribe said nothing about it; but he hoped to be able to make his way into it in some way. He directed his course toward the lake in such a direction as to strike it half a mile from the cabin of the hunchback. At this point he had concealed the canoe which he had used at various times in crossing the lake. He found it safe, and waited for darkness. When it came, he pushed out and paddled cautiously toward the headland in which the cavern was situated. He remembered to have seen in the side fronting on the lake, an opening in the rock, into which the water flowed. He did not doubt that in some way this communicated with the cave. Crowding the canoe close to the side of the rock, he crawled into this opening. Hardly had he done so, when he became conscious that there was a light in the earth below. The opening was but little longer than a man's body, in the solid rock, and ended in a small circular hole in the limestone, not more than eight inches in diameter. Looking through this, to his great joy, he discovered the individuals of whom he was in search, for the hole looked directly into the cavern. The hunchback sat upon a stone, close to the opening by Sadia's bed, with a drawn sword by his side. A little way off, sitting upon a heap of skins, and resting her beautiful head against Stanton's knee, while his fingers unconsciously toyed with her clustering hair, sat Sadia. The faces of all three expressed utter misery, though all tried to be brave. They were starving! And oh, the unutterable misery of such living death. The Indian understood it. He had seen men before this time perishing for lack of food. Rough and untutored savage though he was, he could not see a woman starve without compassion. He dared not call out to them, for it might attract attention, so he picked up a pebble at his feet, and threw it at Stanton. It struck him on the shoulder, and he looked up quickly, and saw a dusky hand thrust through the opening, waving to and fro to attract attention.

"By heaven," he cried, "'tis the Oneida! Look up, my darling. Here is one who may aid us. Wando!"

"No talk!" whispered the Indian, placing his honest face close to the aperture and filling up the space with his

hands to keep in the sound. "Tory hear we. Wando be kill?"

"Can you do any thing for us?"

"Me try," said Wando. "Keep good heart; no be 'fraid!"

At this moment they heard a hoarse voice outside, saying,

"Here is a canoe!"

Wando became silent, and a moment after there came a sudden plunge in the water. A tory had discovered the canoe of the Indian, and as he was bending over it, the latter struck him on the back of the head with the hatchet and knocked him senseless into the water. A comrade who heard him fall sprung forward and seized the Indian, who, nothing loth, grappled with him and brought him to the ground. The spot where the struggle took place was on the headland under which the cavern ran. The fellow who had seized Wando was a strong man, but no match for the active savage, who managed to get a tolerably tight grip on his throat as they fell, so that the struggle went on in silence. He was getting black in the face, and began to think his hour had come, when he suddenly found himself freed from the weight of the savage, and, rising to his feet, still somewhat confused at the harsh treatment he had received at the hands of Wando, he found that his friend, who had been prostrated by the first blow, had risen from the water and attacked the Indian from behind. The first thing he did was to pass a stick through the arms of his red foe and fasten it tightly. Wando was a prisoner in the hands of his enemies.

They dragged him to the cabin where Tom Goldey made his quarters. The tory was greatly elated, for his cruel nature thirsted for blood, and here was a victim.

"You are Wando, the Oneida?" he said.

"Why should I Wando lie? His name is known among the Nations. He is a great brave. Many a time has he gone to battle; always he has come back with many scalps. What says the white man to a chief of the Oneida?"

"Were you near our camp to-day?"

"Why should I tell you a lie, I say? You speak the truth."

"Was it you who shot one of my men while the Mohawk climbed the tree?"

"All men must die some time," replied Wando. "If they die now, it is very good. They have but one time. Wando fired at Goldey. But a limb caught the rifle and pulled it aside. If it had not been for that, Goldey would not question me now."

The tory turned pale with suppressed anger.

"Do you mean to tell me that you tried to kill me?"

"Try *hard* to get a scalp," said Wando, with inimitable composure. "Why not? Brave warrior likes to get scalps from men. He does not kill boys and women."

"You brag of it then, you red scoundrel! I will make you smart for that, I give you my word. Where is the Mohawk?"

"He has gone to the happy hunting-grounds of his people," said Wando, with an impressive gesture of his brown hand toward the sky. "He died like a brave man, with arms in his hands. Wando kindled a fire by the body, to light the soul in the darkness."

"Did you kill him, then?"

"Loose my hands and I will show you?" replied the Oneida.

Tom Goldey made a silent gesture, and they took the bonds from his arms. He took the scalp of the Mohawk by its long hair, and shook the hideous trophy in the face of the astonished tory. Tom fell back in dismay as some drops of clotted blood were sprinkled in his face. But he recovered himself instantly.

"Kill the bloody dog!" he shouted. "He has confessed. Kill him where he stands."

Their knives flew out together. Wando turned. The door stood invitingly open, and, rising with an agile bound, he shot over the heads of those who stood in the doorway before they could strike a blow. Several of them discharged their rifles at him as he ran, without any visible effect. Goldey came out foaming, knocking the astonished tories right and left, and joined in the pursuit. But, Wando had gained the woods, and in the darkness was safe from any pursuit. And while Tom Goldey ranged the forest, striving to find him out, Wando was far away upon the trail, determined to bring aid to his friend or die in the attempt.

The appearance of the Indian had revived hope in the breasts of the besieged, who were fighting the grim champions whom Tom Goldey had elected to do battle for him, in the cavern. Stanton, who knew the character of Wando, said that he would leave no stone unturned to rescue them, if, indeed, he had escaped. But they had heard the struggle on the bank above, and feared that the Indian had been taken.

"Why did he leave the opening so abruptly?" said Sadia. "If he is taken our last hope is gone."

"Not yet," said Stanton. "There are many things which desperate men will do to save their own lives and the lives of those who are dear to them. Trust me, my darling, I could bear much pain myself and never give a sign; but it is your sufferings which are hardest to see."

"I do not suffer much," she said, with an attempt to be cheerful. "I can bear a great deal, with you by my side."

He kissed her with passionate eagerness, and the tears sprung into her eyes. "My curse upon Tom Goldey, living or dead," he said.

"And mine," said the solemn voice of the hunchback. "But, I am most to blame. I should not have brought her to this dreadful place. But I loved you, Sadia; you must forgive me."

"Forgive you?" she cried. "As if I have any thing to forgive! I remember who it was that took me up, a friendless, wandering child, gave me a home, was ever kind and faithful, whose love and tenderness never failed. No, my father; do not speak of forgiveness to me, when I have cause to be least thankful for the good you have done me."

He struck his forehead with his open hand. "You hear her?" he cried. "She speaks of what I have *done*, forgetting that I brought her here. Stanton, can you think of nothing, so nothing, to save her? Why do we sit here inactive, when we should use our strength while we have it to save her from this dreadful fate?"

"If we could reach that opening," said Stanton, looking up at the roof of the cavern, "perhaps we might break through."

"Right," cried the hunchback, eagerly. "Let us see what we can do."

He went into the other cavern and brought out a crowbar, a pick, and a stout chisel. With the latter he began to cut into the limestone, to make places for the hands and feet. In half an hour, they had formed a double pair of steps, by means of which they ascended to the opening. From this they could look out upon that beautiful lake, stretching away in the distance as far as the eye could reach almost, though the blue outline of the distant shore could be dimly seen through the beautiful moonlight.

"Be careful," whispered Stanton, as Sadia came under the place where they were working. "One of the fragments might chance to strike you."

She stepped back a little way and watched them, as they labored with as little noise as possible, striving to enlarge the opening. If they could do this, another night might see them at liberty. While the attention of all was directed to the work, a head appeared at the opening which led to the outer cavern. It was one of the tories set to guard the bridge, who had mustered courage to creep along the wall and spy upon the actions of those they sought to slay. The fellow with difficulty repressed a chuckle of delight as he saw the work upon which they were engaged, and could not deny himself the pleasure of watching them for a while, before he informed Goldey of the work they were doing. Had he departed at once, all might have been well with him.

Among the hunchback's other remarkable gifts, was that of seeing, by the magnetic power given to but few on earth, when he was under the steady glance of a human eye. He was certain, either that some one had come into the cavern or was looking in. While prying at a large block of lime stone, he managed to turn towards the opening in such a way as to get a glimpse of it under his arm, and he saw the leering face of the tory looking in. Caspar's pistols were in his belt and taking one of them out without turning his face from the rock, he stooped a little and fired at the fellow under his arm. The bullet struck him in the middle of the forehead as he was about withdrawing his head, and he fell upon the stone steps, dead before he touched them. Caspar returned the pistol to his belt, rapidly descended from the elevated position he occupied, and ran to the opening. He

could hear a hurried scampering, and knew that those who had accompanied the spy were hurrying back to their position at the bridge, leaving their companion to his fate, whatever it might be. Caspar pushed the body away and it rolled down the steps among the scattered fragments of the engine.

"Lie there," he said, "a lesson to all who dare to spy upon the actions of the persecuted hunchback."

"What have you done?" whispered Sadia.

"Killed one of the miscreants who pen us up here," was the reply. "Kill him as I would kill a dog, or any thing beastly which endangered the safety of any thing I love. Work on, Stanton; I will stay here."

He sat down near the opening and watched the labors of the young soldier. Block after block was torn away from the wall, and the moonlight was streaming in from the enlarged space.

"You will succeed," said the dwarf, joyfully. "If we can only escape from this hideous place."

"It is done," said Stanton, dropping the bar and preparing to descend.

"Do not come down," said Caspar. "Go out and see if the coast is clear."

Stanton crept carefully out to the edge of the lake, and started back in dismay at the sight which met his eyes. A canoe was rocking on the water under the mouth of the opening, containing four men who had there arms ready for use. They had discovered the opening when Wando was taken, and fearing that it was another outlet from the cavern, had set a guard upon it for the night. Stanton came back and descended at once to the others. A single look at his face convinced them that their hope was gone, yet they could not give up all hope at once.

"What is it?" said Caspar.

"The passage is guarded," he said. "That hope is gone."

Without another word Caspar went out into the other cavern and called to the guard at the bridge.

"What do you want?" said one. "Ain't you killed enough of our men, you old devil?"

"Send Tom Golday here."

As Golday had left orders with the men to call him if the

hunchback sent for him, one of them went up to the cabin. Goldey came down at once, and found Caspar in the outer cavern, holding a torch in his hand.

"You have sent for me," said Goldey. "What do you want?"

"I did not send for you to make an appeal to your mercy for myself or Stanton," replied the dwarf. "But come with me into the other cavern and see what you are doing to that poor child who is so unfortunate as to be penned up here with us. Will you trust yourself with us there?"

"You promise not to make any attempt to detain me, do you not?"

"Yes. You shall be free to go when you please."

Sadia started up as Goldey entered, her already pallid cheek growing paler.

"Why do you bring this fellow here, father?" she said. "It is only adding to our misery."

"I have brought him here in the hope that the sight of a starving woman may wake some compassion in his heart, if he has one. I ask you, before this brave girl, to say that you will let her go free, and then you shall do with us as you please."

"Father!" cried Sadia.

"My child," said the dwarf, "do not interrupt us. Here we are, two men who have wronged you, as you think. We offer ourselves in atonement, and only stipulate that no harm shall be done to this girl. I do not think we ask too much."

"Your offer is fair enough," said Tom. "What do you say, Captain Stanton? Do you also agree to this? Will you yield yourself to be dealt with as we please if I promise to set the young lady at liberty?"

"I do, upon these conditions: You shall send her, under escort, to Fort Schuyler, and bring back a note from her stating that she is safe in the fort, indorsed by Colonel Gansevoort, whose handwriting I know."

"Why do you doubt my honor?" said Goldey, angrily. "In that shape, I can not accept your terms. Besides implying a doubt of my honor, it makes it necessary for some of my men to trust themselves in the clutches of Gansevoort, which they

will not do. Again, we have not the time to spare. To go to the fort and return, traveling only as fast as a lady could, would require three days, more time than we can spare. We are certain to have you out of this in a few days at most. I will not agree to your proposition."

"I have another argument to make," said the dwarf. "Stay here."

He disappeared for a few moments, and they heard a clinking sound from the inner cavern, and then he came back, with his hands full of gold pieces, which he laid upon the bare rock at their feet. Tom Goldey's eyes glistened with aroused *cupidity*.

"These are my arguments," said the dwarf. "Do you think they are strong ones?"

"The very strongest," said Goldey, with a hoarse laugh. "This is friendly; do you mean to make me a present of these yellow boys?"

"I propose to give you five hundred guineas, as a token of what I can do, upon your promising to set us all at liberty."

"What is your offer?"

"I will give you, as I said, five hundred guineas *now*, with a promise that, immediately on our arrival at Fort Schuyler, I will make up the sum to five thousand. It will make you a rich man."

"Have you the money?"

"Yes."

"And you say that if I take you to Fort Schuyler, and set you at liberty, I shall have the rest?"

"I give you my word."

Tom began to pace excitedly up and down the cavern. His eyes glistened upon the heap of gold placed upon the floor. Five thousand guineas! What could he not do with so much liberty? He could remove to Canada or to England, and live the life of a gentleman. Then he thought that perhaps the dwarf was deceiving him. Where should that distorted lump have so much money? It was impossible. All he had was before them. But, if he had more, it must be *here*, and when they had yielded, as they must do soon, he could find it, perhaps much more, and the band should never know that it was *there*.

"Put up your money, old crookback," he said. "I will have nothing to do with it."

"You refuse then?"

"Yes. I leave you in the hands of my champions, Hunger and Thirst."

With these words, he was gone.

CHAPTER XII.

HUNGER AND THIRST.

THE plan of Tom Goldey succeeded but too well. A guard was placed at the bridge, so that the girl could not fulfill her threat of self-destruction, as well as to preclude the possibility of escape. Three days passed, and all the food was gone two days before, and they had not tasted water since the first morning. The men did not think of their own danger and sufferings, so much as those of the unfortunate girl. She bore it bravely, and did all she could to comfort them as they sat there, two pale specters, guarding the narrow entrance. The hunchback had not spoken since the morning, but his eyes dwelt on Sadia with a sort of remorseful tenderness, which was sad to see. She felt it, and went to him, taking his hand in hers, (the small white hand which Stanton had hoped to claim, but which seemed now destined only for the hand of death,) and tried to win him from his sad thoughts. At eight o'clock in the evening they made her lie down to get a little rest, hoping that she might forget her miseries in sleep; and those men, who loved her better than they loved life, bent above her and *prayed* that she might *never wake again*.

"I brought this upon her," cried the hunchback, bitterly. "This is *my* work. *I*, who brought her to this dismal cavern. I thought it would be a refuge from savage beasts and men who have less pity. And now; see! see!"

He bowed his head above her in a transport of grief. Stanton could not comfort him, and allowed him to give his passion full scope. Then he rose, and buckled on his sword which lay beside the opening.

"What are you to do?" said Stanton, laying his hand upon his arm.

"I have registered a vow while kneeling there," was the answer. "And that vow is, that I will have food for that poor child, or perish in the attempt. Do not stay me. I go upon a holy duty."

"It is my privilege," said the young man. "I *love* her."

"You *can not* love her as I do," said the dwarf, "because you do not know her well as I. But, stay here and defend her. Oh, Stanton, you can not tell how it grieves me to see her lying there, when it is out of my power to aid her in any way. Loose your hold, and if you hear my whistle, come to me."

He stole away like a shadow, his footsteps making no echo in the cavern. A few moments, which seemed hours to the listener, passed by, when all at once the whistle of the hunchback was heard. Stanton drew his pistols and sprung through the opening. Half way to the bridge he met the dwarf, fighting desperately with half a dozen of the tories, who hemmed him in on either side. Stanton made them aware of his coming by passing his blade through the body of one of the combatants with such force that the hilt struck against his breast-bone. At the same moment he received a blow which deprived him of his senses. Returning to consciousness, he became assured that he was being carried along the passage, and could hear in the cavern behind him the rattle of steel, and knew that the gallant hunchback still fought. All at once there was silence, and then the shriek of a woman rung in their ears. Stanton struggled with his captors and almost escaped their grasp, upon which he was thrown down and bound hand and foot. In this condition he was carried to the upper air, where they were shortly after joined by the rest of the party, with Salia and the dwarf in their power. While the latter contended with numbers, two of the tories had slipped past him and laid hands upon Salia while sleeping. At the same time the dwarf succumbed to their united efforts. They were led into the presence of Tom Golley, who could not restrain his hellish joy at the spectacle.

"My little plan has succeeded," he said, with a barbastic laugh. "May I ask how you relished your fare in the cavern?"

"We are in your power," said the dwarf. "Cease to taunt us. And give that poor girl some food. For myself, I care not. We are men, and able to bear it. Do not let your malice extend to an innocent girl."

"Certainly not," said Tom. "I am a gentleman, I hope. Tomkins, give the young lady something to eat. In the mean time, leave the cabin, all of you."

A plate of venison was placed before Sadia, who refused to touch it unless the others were allowed to partake. After some hesitation, Goldey ordered in a guard, and unbound the hands of the two men. But two tories stood by with loaded muskets, ready to blow out their brains, if they made any attempt to escape. All the time Tom stood near, his villainous face rendered doubly hideous by his demoniac joy.

"By Jove," he muttered, "who would have thought that such a flower could bloom here? By my soul, she is worthy to be the wife of an emperor, but she shall, instead, be the wife of a soldier, and when the war is over, and I earn a title to the estates of some of these rich whigs, she shall be mine. I am sorry," he continued, in a louder tone, "that I was forced to use harsh measures to get you into my hands. Will you favor me with a word aside from the others, my dear Miss?"

"You can have nothing to say to me, which they can not hear," replied Sadia.

"I have, though. Would you like to see them at liberty?"

"Would I not?" cried Sadia, clasping her hands. "I will listen to what you have to say."

They went out into the open air together. The tories who were gathered near, retreated to a respectful distance, and Goldey addressed himself to Sadia:

"I shall find it hard to persuade my men to let the fellows go, for the hunchback has killed a great many of my band, and Captain Stanton has been tried and sentenced to death by a court-martial. But, if you do what I ask, I will give you my word that they shall be set free at once."

"What do you ask me to do?" she demanded.

"Nothing at present, except to give me your promise that when the war is over, you will be my wife, and to leave the hunchback and put yourself under my protection."

"Sir," said Sadia, angrily. "You ask too much. I do not know you, have never seen you until this week, and have no desire to know you better. There are other reasons why I can not comply with your request, which I will not give."

"I do not force it on you," said Goldey, in a tone of quiet determination. "But, by your decision, you doom them both to death. A guard there, ho!"

The sergeant came forward quickly,

"Take a file of ten men and execute Captain Stanton in accordance with the sentence of the court-martial," said Goldey.

The sergeant chose his men, and marched them into the house. In five minutes he emerged, leading the prisoner, who walked with head erect, as if he gloried in his death. Sadia threw herself weeping on his breast, but was torn away by the tory sergeant, and pushed back out of the line.

"Oh, spare him!" she pleaded, extending her hands to Goldey. "You can save his life."

The eyes of the tory began to blaze. He knew his rival now. He knew one of the reasons which she would not give.

"You have signed his death-warrant," replied Goldey, "unless you consent to do as I require. I give you one more chance. If you take it, I will save his life, much as I hate him; but, if you refuse, by my word as a soldier, he dies within ten minutes."

"What demand does he make?" asked Stanton, appealing to her.

"Oh, Sadi: n, he asks me to marry him."

"Defy him, then. I will meet any death to save you from that disgrace."

"Is there not a worse fate than being my wife?" hissed Goldey. "Fool, you forget that she is entirely in my power! Look at you, and you will see men who have lost friends at your hands, and I will not think any fate too bad for those who destroyed them. I can do what I like with her."

"You can not be such a villain."

"I told no more with you. Girl, your answer."

She hesitated.

"I take that sweet silence for consent," he continued, "and thus I claim you for my bride."

He bent to kiss her, and the outraged girl struck him in the face. A quick flush shot up into his cheek, and then receded, leaving it white, even to the lips. She had never seen a man so angry. For a moment he could not control his voice to speak, and then he shouted,

"Place him against yonder tree, sergeant. Aim at the body, and fire when I drop my handkerchief."

"You need not do that," said Stanton, pushing aside the cord with which the sergeant would have bound him to the tree. "I have faced death in battle, and do not fear to meet it now. Aim at my heart."

"Oh, save him! save him!" cried Sadie, "and I will do all you ask."

"That chance is over," replied Goldey, coldly. "Here, take this girl away."

"You can not be so cruel," pleaded the poor girl. "Think what you are doing. You are sending an innocent human being out of the world—"

"Innocent! A Schoharie whig! Ha, ha, ha! Here, men, take this girl away. We can not be bothered with her now."

Two strong villains seized her, and began to drag her away amid the execrations of Stanton, who remained standing against the tree. He called down maledictions on the head of Tom Goldey if he dared to harm her, which the tory answered by a savage laugh.

"Are you ready?" he said to the sergeant.

"Ready!" was the stern reply.

"Then go on with your duty."

"Ready!" cried the sergeant to his men. "Take aim fire!"

The volley rang out upon the morning air. But, where was the prisoner? Not at the tree, which had received the volley. Just as the word fire trembled on the sergeant's lips, he had slipped round the tree and vanished. And then a war-cry rose quivering on the air—the shout of the Oneidas! It was Wando. While the tories were occupied with Sadie, he had slipped up to the tree and cut the bonds upon the hands of his friend. The whole band started forward with an angry cry, with Goldey leading, when all at once a fearful volley of musketry swept through and through their ranks,

followed by a ringing cheer. The men of Stanton had come to their leader's aid. That dreadful volley had stretched several of the tories upon the sod, and the remainder, with the prisoners in the center, began to retreat. But the hunchback refused to proceed.

"Will you go on?" said Golley, drawing a pistol as he spoke.

"I will not," answered the hunchback. "Do with me as you will."

The pistol exploded, and the hunchback sunk down at the feet of his destroyer, with the blood gushing from his breast. Sadia threw herself shrieking upon his body, escaping a second volley which was poured in by the patriots. Then they charged so suddenly that the tories were forced to leave the girl. As they were about to plunge into the thicket, a detachment of patriots rose on the opposite side, and gave them another volley. This was too much. They retreated again toward the center of the opening, where they were surrounded by their enemies. No quarter was given or asked, and when the strife was over, all but two of the tories had perished. Tom Golley fell by the sword of Stanton, as he was trying to escape.

When the battle was over, Stanton ran to look for Sadia. He found her bending over the body of the wounded hunchback, who lay bleeding to death. The young man did his best to stop the flowing blood. The dwarf looked up and put his hand gently aside.

"It is of no use," he said, calmly. "I died as I expected to die, and you have avenged me. I knew when I met him, that he was the instrument which was to free my soul from its prison, and it is done. Oh, Sadia, what an introduction you are having to the great world! We were happier, my dearest, in our cavern. I, with my pet inventions, you with your books and work. You will forget me when I am gone."

"Never," said Sadia. "Oh, can you not save him?"

Stanton struck his head sadly.

"The battle has gone home. I am glad to die, now that I can leave you safe. Stanton, you did not think to have my pet so soon, but my death makes it necessary. Remember

the treasure in the cave. And one thing more. When you set up the stone at my grave, as in after times I hope you will do, carve this upon it, and over it my name:

"HE DID WHAT IT WAS GIVEN HIM TO DO."

"Listen! You have known me as Caspar Decker. I have a prouder name than that, and you must put it on the stone. Gabriel St. Leger!"

"Are you indeed that long-lost heir to the honors which St. Leger holds to-day?"

"I am. Let him hold the empty title. I claim it not. But the name is *mine*, and he must never know that his minions killed his cousin. Boy, be true to Sadia, for she has been true to me. Sadia, love him whom I have both loved and hated in my day. Tell your father that I forgive him, Stanton, for he had good cause to hate me. Ah! Lift me up."

They raised him higher, the blue eyes closed for ever, and the hunchback had gone to his long home.

They made a grave for him by the side of the silent lake, and he, whose life had been so deeply cursed, slumbered in peace at last.

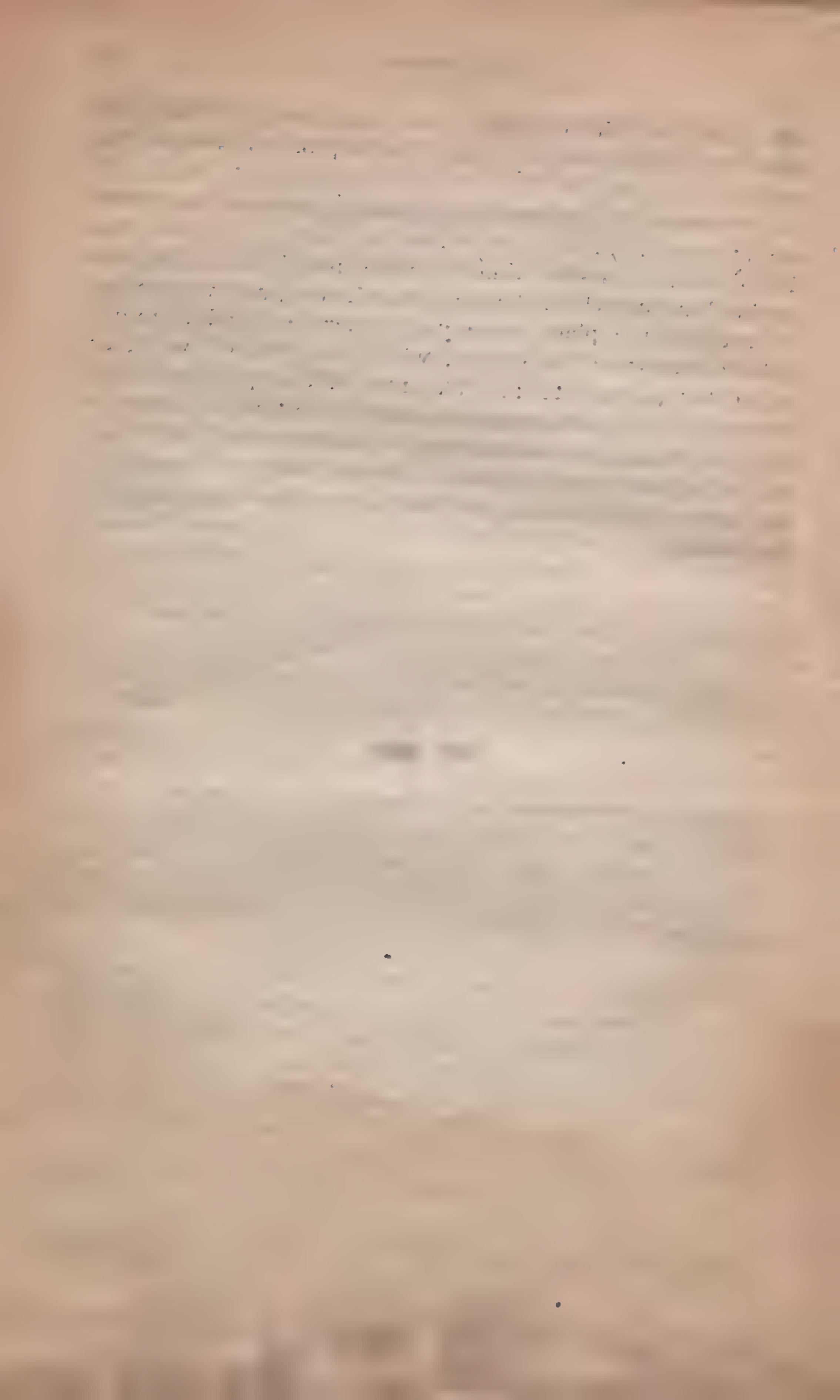
St. Leger was gone from Schuyler. A half-witted fellow brought the report that Arnold was coming with a strong force, and the Indians at once took to flight. Wando, discovering that Goldey had left camp some days before, had followed on his trail. On the flight of St. Leger he had returned to the fort and brought a force against Goldey. The result we know.

Immediately on their return to the fort, the young people were united by the chaplain of Gansevoort's regiment, and went home, he having received a short furlough. The elder Stanton heard with singular interest the story of the dwarf, and regretted the part he had acted against him.

"Of course," he said, "we knew nothing of the circumstances under which your uncle was killed. We only knew that Gabriel St. Leger did the deed and fled. I took it on myself to avenge my brother's murderer. The hunchback was of a quiet nature, unless roused to anger, when he was no longer guided by reason. Poor fellow, it is well he is an

test. And, for the daughter you have brought home, my dear son, we will take her and love her, for her sake as well yours."

It is not to be supposed that Stanton neglected to remove the treasure from the cave when they left it. It was well they did so. For some time the water had been wearing out the headland in which the cave was situated, and when Stanton revisited the place some years after, he found it impossible to penetrate the cavern, which was full of water, or, rather, the passage to it. The roof of this passage finally fell in, and a thicket sprung up above it, so that even the site was lost, though the descendants of that marriage still keep up the legend of its existence. Wando died at a good old age in the Oceida nation, and was always the firm friend of the whites.



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